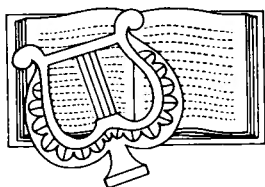




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In Memoriam

Ruth Candler Lovett

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GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.



VOL. II.

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF CLARENTINE.

Spesso Amor sotto la forma
D'Amistà ride, e s'asconde:
Poi si mischia, e si confonde
Con lo sdegno, e col rancor.
In Pietade ei si trasforma;
Par trastullo, e par dispetto:
Ma nel suo diverso aspetto
Sempr'egli, è l'istesso Amor.

BUONDELMONTE.

When lurking Love in ambush lies
Under Friendship's grave disguise;
When he wears an angry mien,
Imitating spite or spleen;
When like pity he beguiles,
Or like joy he gaily smiles;
Still, though long the cheat may last,
'Tis but lurking Love at last.

H. L. P.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR G. WILKIE AND J. ROBINSON,
57, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1808.

GERALDINE FAUCONBERG.



LETTER I.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

My dear Augusta,

Highgrove Park,
Sept. 29.

LAST night, something being said concerning my brother's impending departure, Mr. Archer gave him a slight invitation to return at Christmas, when he means to have a large party in the house. Nothing seems determined, however; and I own, that his going away at this moment appears to me a very, very serious evil. Geraldine professes to regret it more than we had reason to suppose she would: but, I fear, a little degree of self-interest may influence her feelings on this occasion. Ferdi-

nand has given her a few lessons to facilitate her in the practice of sketching views; and yesterday, as she was proceeding, with her drawing-book in her hand, to choose a spot favourable to their purpose, she said—

“This is giving you very useless trouble, I fear, Mr. Lesmore, for when you are gone, I shall forget all you have taught me.”

“O no; if you continue practising, you know enough now to improve by yourself.”

“But I shall not have half the spirit about it! I wish you had given your instructions sooner, or would stay longer to render them of more avail.”

“Whatever your motive may be for forming such a wish, I cannot but be flattered by it. Yet, I think you have already had patience with me a wonderful time!”

“There are many people,” resumed she, “who, though they do not get easily acquainted, become very good friends when the ice is once broken. I hope,” added she, half smiling, “that is beginning to be the case with us, Mr. Lesmore.”

“There is so much delicacy and gentleness

in your reproof, if indeed you are capable of intending it as such, that I might suffer it to pass without appearing conscious of your meaning. But I am anxious, Miss Fauconberg, to seize every opportunity of apologizing to you in the most humble manner, for the strangeness and unpardonable negligence of my conduct when first I had the honour of being introduced to you. Let not its remembrance, I beseech you, influence your future thoughts of me; and, if you can, indulge me, before I go, with a generous assurance of pardon."

"I am shocked," cried she, "that any thing I said, should, for a moment, excite an idea that I meant to insinuate the slightest reproach. Pray believe me when I assure you, that nothing was further from my mind: and never again solicit pardon from one who has no offence to forgive."

Now this we know to be untrue. And her verses prove that she *has* been angry. However, as she did not choose to undergo the mortification of acknowledging it, Ferdinand

was forced to seem satisfied with this sort of negative absolution.

We dine to-day at Mrs. Neville's. She has already a fresh importation of visitors to supply the place of her cold and formal nieces. Sir Henry and Lady Tresilian are her present guests, with a young relation of theirs. We met them all whilst we were riding out yesterday; and I thought, for you know I am become a prodigious scrutinizer of Lesmore's countenance, that, on first seeing Sir Henry, he looked—I cannot define how—but not well pleased. However, they spoke with apparent civility; and no one else, I believe, observed any thing remarkable in their address to each other.



Sept. 30.

OUR dinner yesterday, at Westhill, was extremely agreeable. In addition to Mrs. Neville's newly-arrived guests, we met there our friends the Everleys and Colonel Courtville.

By the way, Ferdinand has taken a very extraordinary fancy into his head respecting the gallant colonel. You remember, I doubt not, my mentioning to you, some time ago, a beautiful picture of him when a youth, which we saw at his sister's. This picture I then advised Geraldine to paint a miniature from ; and Mrs. Everley, taking the proposal literally, and probably flattered by our admiration of it, sent it here for that purpose a few days after. Something else, however, was in hand ; so the colonel's smiling resemblance, to be out of the way, was put into one of the spare bed-chambers. Mrs. Everley has continually inquired what progress Geraldine was making in her copy ; and, at last, from the mere apprehension of disobliging her, the miniature was begun.

Now, this newly-undertaken work, and the portrait from which Geraldine is reducing it, have both been seen by Lesmore in the dressing-room, and fill him with anxiety and dismay. The idea of Lord Litchmere as a rival seems never to have entered his imagination. If there is any one in this vicinity whom he

appears disposed to consider in that light, it is the handsome, insinuating Colonel Courtville, whose attention to Geraldine whenever he meets her, is certainly most devoted and profound; but so it is to almost every young lady he happens to be in company with: he is a universal flirt, with no more heart or meaning, probably, than a wooden doll. Yet Ferdinand, who has had less opportunity of observing Lord Litchmere than I have had, and has always manifested considerable uneasiness at the soft glances of the colonel, seems now, in consequence of this foolish picture, worked up to the highest pitch of discomposure and alarm. I explained to him all the circumstances attending its loan: but the honour conferred upon the original (who, probably, remains unconscious of his happiness) appears to Lesmore so supereminent, that he can do nothing but envy and sigh at it.

Men are very silly creatures, my dear sisters, even the wisest of the race. Geraldine and I have laughed a hundred times, in the presence of Ferdinand, at the *dolci lu-*

~~singhe~~ the melting looks, the ineffable softness of the poor colonel; and yet, simply because he is handsome (for I know not what other recommendation he possesses, unless apparent good temper be taken into the account), the man is deemed irresistible! To be jealous of so insipid a personage, is an insult to Geraldine's taste and understanding.

But to return to our dinner-party.

On entering the drawing-room at Westhill we found the lady of the house, and her several inmates, disposed of in the most characteristic manner imaginable. On a sofa, at one end of the room, sat, or rather reclined, Sir Henry Tresilian, his eyes half closed, one leg stretched upon the seat, and one arm thrown over its back. Near him, with more condescension and patience than I suspected her to possess, was stationed Mrs. Neville, a volume of *Delille's* poems in her hand, from which she was reading select passages to him aloud. At a neat, unlittered table, in the middle of the apartment, was posted Lady Tresilian, dressed with the nicest exactitude, and poring her eyes, with very exemplary as-

siduity, over an endless piece of muslin embroidery. A pretty, elegant girl, of about fourteen, her niece, was seated close beside her, doing her best to imitate so laudable a pattern of industry.

Our appearance changed the face of things. Mrs. Neville received us with the most graceful cordiality; presented us to her guests; and devoted herself to us, till the arrival of the Everleys. I then had leisure to contemplate the ill-paired baronet and his wife; for such I was sure they were: and my opinion has since been confirmed by what I have learnt concerning them from Mr. Archer and Lesmore, who both knew them before.

Sir Henry, affected, and impertinently supine as he appeared when we first beheld him, is not always so languid and inanimate. We found him, towards the end of the day, equally agreeable and entertaining: but these fits of real, or pretended lassitude, often steal upon him, and he takes no trouble to shake them off. His general character is that of a very dissipated man of fashion, who having outran his estate at an early period of his

minority; married, to repair it, the wealthy daughter of a prosperous banker, whom he cared not one straw for at the time, and has treated with negligence and contempt ever since. He seems to be scarcely thirty; his exterior is prepossessing, his countenance penetrating and sensible, and his manners, occasionally, remarkably pleasing.

But how shall I do justice to the indescribable insipidity of his luckless wife? Imagine a tall, upright figure, of about two or three and thirty, dressed, as I observed before, as if freshly taken out of a bandbox; a set smile upon her face, which yet looks fretful and unsatisfied; hair almost as light as flax; no eye-brows; small, dull, grey eyes; a faint *purplish* colour, fixed like a spot, upon the summit of her cheek bones; a very long upper lip; and a nose, somewhat pinched, which promises, in process of time, to be tipped with the same tint that decorates her cheeks.

All this, you will allow, makes not an agreeable assemblage; but it is no excuse for the insulting conduct observed towards her by her husband. He does not absolutely

tell her in company she is a fool; but if he attends to her at all when she speaks, his looks invariably declare that he thinks her so. The little cant matrimonial phrase of "my dear," proceeding from his lips, has the most ridiculous effect imaginable; it is uttered so mechanically, and, in general, precedes or follows a meaning so sarcastic or contemptuous, that, but for pity of the poor soul to whom it is addressed, I could with difficulty forbear laughing.

The conversation during dinner turned chiefly upon the subject of sea-bathing places, and other fashionable summer-haunts. Sir Henry and his lady were just returned from the Sussex coast. Geraldine, who loves the sea passionately, and delights in parties upon the water, walks on the sands, or clambers among the rocks, asked Lady Tresilian, who happened to be her neighbour, whether she had indulged much in any of these amusements during her residence on the coast?

"No," said her ladyship, "I did very little of all this; I am rather fearful upon the water: and besides, we had no sailing vessel

of our own; and the getting in and out of a dirty hired boat, soils one, and makes one so uncomfortable, I never was tempted to try it above once."

"I have been more fortunate than your ladyship," resumed Geraldine, "for though always condemned to a hired vessel, the pleasure I have derived from some of these little excursions has been infinite."

"Well, to me," cried her ladyship, "I do not think it would be a greater punishment to enter a hackney-coach! What shoes you have when you step out! What a nasty fringe to the bottom of your gown! I assure you, I was quite unwilling to wear any of the same clothes again."

"If you are very good in this world, my dear," said Sir Henry, helping himself to a second plateful of fish, "and bear all its crosses and vexations with Christian patience, you may chance to go to heaven: and then what will you do if you find its floor has not been duly swept?"

"In such a case," said Mrs. Neville, "here

ladyship had better ask to come back again to her own orderly mansion."

"And make room," resumed Sir Henry, "for those who prefer ease and convenience, to restraint, a duster, and a scrubbing brush!"

"Upon my word," said Lady Tresilian, with some solemnity, "I think when you speak of heaven, you should not do it so familiarly!"

"You cannot tell yet, my dear, how its inhabitants may be affected by such little liberties. Leave the expressions we may use to our own option, therefore, till you are better informed upon the subject."

Colonel Courtville now inquired of Geraldine what were the bathing places she had visited?

She mentioned Hastings as being one to which her uncle had twice carried her.

"You did not there find the sands very delightful."

"No, indeed; but still I had great pleasure in walking upon the shore. I love the

smell of the sea-weed; I love to watch the tide: in short, I can interest myself in all that belongs to a ramble along its coast."

"You are speaking now, Miss Fauconberg," said Lesmore, "as an admirer of nature, not as a votary of the artificial pleasures which most of those who haunt such places go in quest of."

"Public libraries, gaming houses, balls, plays, and large private parties," said Sir Henry, "are all required to keep alive any degree of spirit in these scenes, which, even with their assistance, soon become wearisome and insipid."

"Then why did you go into Sussex?" inquired Mrs. Neville.

"For the benefit of our little Emma," answered he; "she was out of spirits, and comfortless; and they told me she wanted bracing and sea-air. The fact is, she pined for, what we all love, liberty and exercise. Lady Tresilian has an idea of making the poor child so notable, that she keeps her, whether in town or country, continually employed in plying a needle; and the good girl, I suspect,

has no greater relish for that sort of pastime, than her aunt has for a *fringed petticoat*."

"But it is very fit," said Lady Tresilian, "she should *learn* to have a relish for it! The young ladies of the present day, can all sing, and dance, and play, and converse in foreign languages; but half of them do not know how to hold a needle."

"Very likely, my dear: however, I thought health of more importance than housewifry; so I scampered with our Emma, up hill and down hill, from morning till night; took her out upon the water; set her on horseback; threw her thimble and thread out of the window; and have brought her here with the fine damask glow you now see upon her cheeks."

Lady Tresilian made some disapproving remark upon this unseemly mode of education, which remaining unanswered, she assumed an affronted look, wiped her thin lips, and called for a glass of Madeira and water.

The conversation, after this, became more interesting and general. Mrs. Neville mentioned some of the most popular literary pro-

ductions of the day; drew out the opinions of her guests, gave her own without pedantry or ostentation; and, to do her justice, was, at the head of her own table, every thing you could wish a well-bred and well-informed woman to be.

The interval between dinner and tea, was not without its languid moments. The incredible dulness of poor Lady Tresilian cast a sort of weight upon our spirits. We thought it rude to make two *coteries*; and yet the obligation of belonging to hers was fatiguing beyond measure. As soon as she had drank her coffee, expressing a conviction that we were all provided with work, she sat down to her eternal embroidery. Emma Cecil, her young *protégée*, was summoned to follow the example: and aunt and niece began working as if contending for a prize! Meanwhile, we were all, except Mrs. Neville, in the most laughable distress; for not a creature amongst us was furnished with even an apology for work. Mrs. Neville, we knew, seldom entertained herself in that way, and we had no expectation of meeting at her

house with such a phoenix of industry. To pass off the matter as little to our own discredit as we could, we expressed great regret at having *accidentally* forgotten our work-boxes; talked of patterns, and shining cotton with wonderful fluency; examined and admired the laborious undertaking her ladyship had in hand; and, in short, did very nearly as well as if each of us had been an Arachne.

During the greatest part of this time, Mrs. Neville, seated at another table, was answering a note that had been brought whilst we were at dinner, and which a servant waited to carry back with him. When she had finished and delivered it, she approached our circle.

“ Since knights and ’squires of the once-illustrious Round-table are extinct,” said she, “ I am glad to see, beneath the auspices of the ladies, and under a new appellation, its fallen honours revive, and its ancient consequence re-flourish. Lady Tresilian, and you her fair associates, shall be dubbed queen and damsels of the work-table !”

“ Alas !” cried Geraldine, “ we are so lit-

tle entitled to such a distinction, that, except Lady Tresilian, we all have reason to blush at our idleness."

"Well, then, *you* at least, shall have cause to blush no longer. Come and try whether this instrument is fit to be touched. I sent yesterday for a man to tune it, but he disappointed me, and I almost fear you will find it too bad to bear."

"Let me do Miss Fauconberg the justice to declare," cried Mrs. Everley, "that admirably as she plays, and well entitled, therefore, as she is to be nice, I never knew her; when asked, scruple to perform upon any instrument; or to any person, however ill qualified to judge of her superior excellence."

"I guessed as much from the unaffected character of her countenance, or I should never have had the courage to ask her to sit down to a piano-forte in such wretched order. But with regard to the sickening difficulties which some musical ladies are apt to make, might they not, my dear Mrs. Everley, when they have the misfortune to be requested to

play upon a tin kettle in the shape of an instrument, or to a talking and inattentive audience, set their vanity aside, and content themselves with flourishing on, as if they were practising for their own improvement? Such a plan would spare them a great deal of mortification, and save time into the bargain."

"Very true: for the reluctance that is expressed to play to bad judges, cannot arise from diffidence, but must be the offspring of pride. I can forgive a modest girl who shrinks from the idea of performing to a professor: but I have no indulgence for those who refuse to exert themselves, because they think their auditors too ignorant to estimate their talents as they ought."

Geraldine, laughing and rising, now said—

"After this little lesson, which, however, I hope I did not require, I should be hardy indeed if I hesitated for a moment to play."

"If you *had* required it," said Mrs. Everley, "you would have been less willing to profit by it; and I flatter myself we should have had the grace to administer it less bluntly."

Whilst Geraldine was playing, Mrs. Everley and our elegant hostess, both almost equally fond of music, sat beside her, devoting their whole attention to her performance. Lady Tresilian, however, neither stirred, nor, during the sweetest passages, even looked up, or seemed to hear, much less to feel, a single note. Madame de St. Hermine and I might, perhaps, have been put out of humour by this insensibility, had we not found amusement in observing the very uncommon delight with which little Emma Cecil appeared listening to what was going forward. She dared not, I believe, leave her work to go nearer to the instrument; but, often holding the needle suspended in her hand, and looking as if anxious to banish all sense save that of hearing, she scarcely allowed herself to breathe, from the apprehension of losing any part of so invaluable a treat. When conscious that the eye of her aunt rested upon her, she resumed her occupation; but the minute after, again, as if involuntarily, discontinued it, and gave herself up to the pleasure of undivided attention.

We were joined by the gentlemen before Geraldine was permitted to quit her post; and they all, except Sir Henry, surrounded her chair. He chose to place himself at our table, next his young niece, whom with good-humoured fondness, not unmixed, however, with some degree of roughness, he did everything he could to disturb from her employment, and render rude and noisy. The poor girl, probably afraid of incurring a reprimand from her aunt, sought, with supplicating looks, to keep him quiet; but the more backward she appeared, the more troublesome he became. Mrs. Neville called him to order several times; Lady Tresilian frowned and murmured—nothing would do: he twitched away the child's work as often as she attempted to proceed with it; stole her thimble; cut her thread; held his hand over her eyes; drew her upon his knee, and one moment kissing her, the next dancing her with a rapid and incessant motion, that almost threatened to deprive her of breath, seemed to have nothing so much at heart as the desire of pro-

voking his wife, and disturbing the rest of the company.

We could not but admire, during this teasing frolic, the modest propriety of Emma's behaviour. At the same time that she did all in her power to discourage her uncle's turbulence, she gave way to no peevishness ; but evinced a command of temper, and a gentleness, very highly to her credit.

During tea, Mrs. Neville gave Sir Henry a direct and unceremonious lecture upon his conduct, which he bore without any symptoms of contrition ; assuring her, he did it all for the good of Emma's health : and declaring that if she had not, now and then, some little relaxation of this sort, but went on perpetually upon her aunt's system of sedentary notability, she would die of stagnation.

"How good of you to show such tender anxiety to keep her blood in circulation ! I suspect, however, that my little placid Emma would have confessed much greater obligation to you, had she been permitted to attend to Miss Fauconberg in quiet. She *has* a soul for music, though you have none."

"Why, thanks to Lady Tresilian, she does not know a note."

"But she has an excellent ear, and a very sweet voice. I taught her, last spring, two or three little airs which she sings perfectly in tune, and in an exceeding interesting manner."

Sir Henry declared he would hear them directly; and Mrs. Neville, to gratify his affectionate impatience, went to the instrument unasked, in order to accompany the little girl; who, thus taken by surprise, confused, and almost in tears, could with difficulty be persuaded, by our united entreaties, to comply with her uncle's humour. At length we conquered her unaffected timidity; she begun, but so softly and tremulously, we could scarcely hear her: by degrees she acquired more courage, and with real delight we then listened to the purest and most ductile young voice you can conceive, singing artlessly, and yet feelingly, a little plaintive air of Jean Jaques Rousseau's. The moment it was ended, Sir Henry, enchanted both by his niece's performance and Mrs. Neville's

kindness in instructing her, was animated in his encomiums of the one and acknowledgements to the other. We joined in assurances to his diffident favourite, of the pleasure she had given us; and even Lady Tresilian seemed moved to something like a feeling of approbation.

When Emma was again permitted to resume her seat, Mrs. Everley ventured to observe to her aunt, that she thought it a pity Miss Cecil was not encouraged to cultivate such musical abilities.

“Why, her time has been pretty much filled up with other masters,” said Lady Tresilian; “and music, in a moderate way, she can take up at any time.”

“Masters!” repeated Sir Henry. “What masters have you ever given her; my dear, except a superannuated, old pothook-maker, who taught her to write a hand fit for a scrivener of the last century? Mistresses, indeed, she has had in profusion! Now tell me, Emma, how many good sort of decayed gentlewomen have you been attended by, for the purpose

of being instructed in what you ladies call fancy work?"

"I don't remember, indeed, uncle."

"That is a pity, for the enumeration could not but edify the company. But amongst the illustrious acquisitions thus obtained, let me record all *I* can recollect. Ladies and gentlemen, Miss Cecil, simple as she sits there, understands the art of drawing patterns through a window; of spotting and dotting upon muslin; and of representing in bright silks, upon satin *as* bright, huge bunches of flaring poppies, holyoaks, and ranunculuses; shepherdesses, with blue scarfs and yellow petticoats, worked to match a face painted of as deep a dye as Jezabel's; and lambs, shorn to the quick, with rose-coloured ribbons tied round their necks!"

It was impossible wholly to preserve our gravity during this ridiculous description of poor Emma's talents; yet, on her aunt's account, we did our utmost not to exceed the bounds of decorum. Lady Tresilian, upon the whole, bore her husband's impertinence very philosophically: I do not mean that she

appeared possessed of entire *imperturbability* ; but entrenching herself behind a strong fortification of affronted looks, her usual resources, I believe, in these cases, she wisely abstained coming to action, and wearying out the assailant, obliged him to raise the siege.

To make her, at least, some temporary amends for being yoked to a sarcastic husband—a scourge, from which heaven, in its mercy, preserve me! Mrs. Neville exerted herself to arrange for her ladyship a whist table. Two of the gentlemen, Mr. Everley and Mr. Archer, readily offered their services ; but it was not so easy to find a third willing to embark in so serious an affair. At length, however, dear Madame de St. Hermine, seeing the party ready to be given up, and observing the disappointment visibly impressed on the countenance of the lady for whose amusement it had been proposed, made a sacrifice of her own inclinations, and consented to fill up the unenvied chair.

The remainder of the evening I cannot give you any connected account of. We had no fixed place, nor any regular conversation.

Something being said about pictures, Mrs. Neville led the way to her dressing-room, to show us a *St. Cecilia*, painted, at her desire, by an Italian artist, now in England, and intended to decorate the front of a chamber organ, at this time building for her. The picture is beautiful, and excited general admiration. But, before we quitted the apartment, its fair mistress underwent, with some justice, the keenest raillery from Sir Henry upon the versatility of her pursuits. Would you believe, that in one part of the room stood an easel, upon which was an unfinished landscape in oils; in another, was a rough sketch from a bust of one of the muses; in a third, the head of a child, just begun in crayons; and in a fourth, a large basket of fruits and flowers, slightly tinted in water-colours! Besides all these, we found little figures of children and animals, modelled in wax; but not one completed: and Sir Henry protested, she had been writing to town, that very day, for a huge block of marble, and a host of chiseling tools, to commence sculptor.

“ And I would recommend to her,” added he, “ to set about a colossal statue of the monster Chimæra, which, however unfinished she may leave it, will serve, justly enough, to represent the shapeless and undecided form ascribed to it by the poets ; and may, at the same time, give no bad idea of the strange jumble of indeterminate ideas that float in the fickle artist’s brain.”

“ Or what think you,” said Lesmore, “ of a statue of the god Terminus, which might be placed upon the boundary of her estate, and the head of which, only, need be finished?”

“ You are both intolerably pert,” cried Mrs. Neville. “ But, Sir Henry, why must my poor Chimæra be colossal?”

“ Because its best situation, to be out of the way of critical examination, will be the roof of the house ; and there, unless it is gigantic, it will not be perceived at all.”

“ Now bear me witness, Mr. Lesmore,” resumed she, “ that the plausible gentleman, who so coolly takes upon him the privilege of ridiculing my harmless caprices, is himself as variable and capricious a mortal as any

under heaven! Have you not a thousand times heard him protest I was the most delightful creature in existence?"

"Who, that knows you," replied Ferdinand, "has *not* protested it?"

"Well, but now to show you the dependence that may be put upon the permanency of his opinions, let me, in presence of you all, declare, that I have been confidently assured, he has, on several recent occasions, spoken of me in terms the direct reverse of all he formerly asserted me to be."

"By all that's sacred, never!" cried Sir Henry, with great warmth. "If such information has, indeed, been communicated to you, it is most diabolically false and wicked! But I hope you are only amusing yourself at my cost; I hope I have no enemy malicious enough to insinuate such poisonous falsehoods in your ear!"

He spoke with an agitation and a vehemence which seemed to stagger his fair accuser. She put her hand upon his shoulder, and, smiling with an air of placability, said—

"Gently, gently, good man! you cannot

fight the evil reporter, even were you so disposed. It was a fiend in petticoats from whom I had my information. I shall be glad to believe the charge unfounded ; for it is no treat to our vanity to think every little bit of flattery addressed to us, is to be followed by ill-natured censures. There, there," added she, patting his arm, " quiet that perturbed spirit of yours ; and let us go down to the whist-players."

During the rest of the evening, Sir Henry, anxious, as it appeared, to make a firm and lasting peace with his charming hostess, paid his court to her with unremitting assiduity. Ferdinand procured for himself a place between Mrs. Everley and Geraldine, upon one of the low sofas near the fire ; and I was left to the care of the gallant and ever-attentive Colonel Courtville. To vary my amusement a little, I talked a good deal to Emma Cecil, who, of the two, has really much the most variety and spirit : but, punctually as the clock struck ten, her aunt sent her off to bed : and then, I had nothing left for it, but attempting to induce my too courteous beau

to get out of his usual routine of complimentary exaggeration. I tried repeatedly to make him converse upon general subjects, and none very deep ones ; such as the opera last spring ; the masquerade given by Lady L— towards the end of the season ; Mrs. ——'s first splendid assembly, &c. &c. These all did very well in their turn, for a few minutes ; but then, before I was aware of it, he got back to his sugary talk and languishing glances, and absolutely drove me to my wit's end to find something new to start. I wonder whether such a man as this, confined for a week to the society of Mrs. Sibylla Milbanke, or to that of Lady Tresilian, would sooth their ears with any of these flatteries ? The habit is so inveterate, I dare say he would, without knowing it.

When we got home, I found an opportunity of asking Ferdinand, whether he gave any credit to the reports made to Mrs. Neville, concerning Sir Henry's treachery ?

"None upon earth," answered he. "Whatever faults Sir Henry may have, that of being unjust to the merit of Mrs. Neville ranks not amongst the number."

"I am glad of it. He really can make himself agreeable, and I am half inclined not to dislike him: but yet, his contemptuous treatment of his wife is very offensive."

"She never had much feeling," resumed Lesmore, "and her well-wishers have only to hope the little that remains may become more obtuse every day; since she certainly has now a worse chance than ever of meeting with kindness."

"Why *now*? Will Mrs. Neville countenance his sarcastic behaviour to her?"

"No; probably not designedly: but can such a woman as Lady Tresilian, without disadvantage, stand a daily comparison with the lively, the elegant, and beautiful Mrs. Neville?"

"How came they both to be visitors at Westhill?"

"Sir Henry is distantly related to Mrs. Neville; they have known each other all their lives: yet, I imagine, it might not be proper he should visit her in her widowed state unaccompanied by his wife."

Lesmore then lighted his bed-room candle, badè me good night, and went up stairs.

And here let me follow his example, and say good night to you both, my two very dear sisters.

Yours ever,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER II.

MISS LESMORE TO THE SAME.

Oct. 2.

FERDINAND left us this morning, not without exciting the regret of the whole party. Mr. Archer, though the result of my brother's long visit here has been less satisfactory than it were to be wished, took of him the most cordial and friendly leave possible, and repeated in plain terms his invitation to him to come down at Christmas. Madame de St. Hermine parted from him as if he had been her son; and scruples not to say that she knows no one like him—no one who possesses such superiority of mind and manners; such delicacy of taste, united to such manliness of conduct; such sweetness of temper, joined to so much discernment and spirit: in short, she says of him, with eloquence and fervour, what we, my dear sisters, have long

thought, but either not dared, or not known, how to express half so well. Geraldine, dear, candid Geraldine, wholly banishing all resentment for the past, speaks unreservedly in his favour; and owns that she saw him depart with the sincerest reluctance: but, however true this may be, I perceive in her no indications of a stronger regard than she might be supposed to feel for a brother; her spirits are unaffected by his absence; she pursues her accustomed employments with the same assiduity as before; and, in all respects, is the very Geraldine she was two months ago. Now, I am not such a romantic damsel as to repine at this because contrary to the usual practice of sentimental heroines; so far from it, that I make it my boast to hold all precipitancy and exaggeration, whether in love or friendship, extremely cheap; and most heartily despise the notion of red-hot passion at first sight; I should therefore by no means murmur on perceiving that Geraldine still remains *heart whole*, if the dread of Lord Litchmere did not incessantly haunt me. We hear that he is to take pos-

session of his newly-rented hunting box, Rushley, next week. Is it very wicked to say, I wish it may be burnt to the ground before he comes? You will think me pardonable, perhaps, when I add, that Rushley is scarcely a mile from the gate of Highgrove Park.

Henceforth, my dear sisters, you must cease to expect from me such long and frequent letters. I never should have taken up the trade of journalist, unless impelled to it by a subject of more than common interest. Generally speaking, I dislike writing: so long, however, as Ferdinand remained here, every occurrence in which he and Geraldine were concerned, gave such fluency to my pen, that I not only wrote without effort, but even with pleasure. I loved to communicate to you my alternate hopes and fears; and to trace the progress of their gradually-increasing regard. All that, for the present, is over; and a lazy fit, I know, will come upon me. Even Mrs. Neville's sprightly observations; Sir Henry's matrimonial sarcasms; Miss Charleburg's pretensions, and her father's vulgar import-

ance, will have no power to stimulate me to exertion. Our own style of life, peacefully happy, and serenely sociable, you already know so well, that nothing new remains to be said upon the subject. Take leave, therefore, oh hard-worn pen! of your two dear correspondents; and return, ye long-neglecting eyes! to your former avocations;—your attempts at drawing, your music, your lame Italian, and, “though last, not least,” your good, plain, English reading.

Eyes and pen both subscribe willingly to this award, and have the honour to be, my dear sisters, your most obedient servants.

J. L.

L E T T E R I I I.

MISS LESMORE TO THE SAME,

Highgrove-Park,
Oct. 12.

I HAVE just received your second letter, my dear Augusta, and perceive, still more plainly than by the first, that you have no inclination to let me wander uninterruptedly in the flowery paths of elegant literature! A gossip I have been, and a gossip you are determined I shall continue. At Parkton Castle you promise me full leisure to be as musical as I please; to read, to draw, to make myself wise enough to scare all the men in the county! At Highgrove Park you require me to be less studious. You are anxious to hear of the arrival and proceedings of Lord Litchmere; of the temper of mind with which Mrs. Neville bears the absence of Ferdinand:—nay, you have even the conscience to expect a further account of the hymeneal felicity of

Sir Henry and Lady Tresilian!—Well, as I cannot now be often called upon to perform the same task, since I leave this dear abode in a fortnight, I will even, for an hour or two, put a mark in the delightful book I am reading—Cowper's Life and Letters, and comply with your insatiable demands.

Lord Litchmere has been at Rushley three or four days. He called here the morning after his arrival, and yesterday we dined with him at Mrs. Everley's. His attention to Geraldine has abated nothing of its lover-like appearance; yet, at present, I believe, is obvious to no eyes but Madame de St. Hermine's and mine. Mr. Archer, in family affairs, like most other men, sees not an inch beyond his nose. We have reason to flatter ourselves he forms no wish for the success of any one except Lesmore; and our noble neighbour may ride or walk over some *beau matin*, trembling, hoping, fearing—and actually make proposals for Geraldine, before her dear, unsuspecting uncle even dreams that he admires her. But we females are not so blind to these interesting little concerns; we

can foretel, almost to an hour, the exact time when a lover will put the important question; we can interpret looks, decipher meanings, trace causes, and prognosticate effects. In short, as is most fair, we are not confined to private life for nothing; we know perfectly how to derive amusement and interest from every domestic incident that occurs—or, that we even fancy *may* occur. Yet, in justice to myself, let me add, that it is not the progress in a tender attachment of every soft swain, and every simpering miss, I would give myself the trouble to observe. What may happen if I enjoy a life of single blessedness twenty or thirty years longer I will not pretend to ascertain; but at present, I very sincerely assure you, that no courtships afford me any amusement, unless I love, and am intimately acquainted with, the parties.

Sir Henry Tresilian, who has many friends in this county, only returned to Westhill yesterday, in time to dress for our dinner-party at the Everleys: he had been absent with his lady near a week, paying different visits. Emma Cecil remained during that interval

with Mrs. Neville, who is grown so fond of her, that we cannot but regret there should be a necessity for them so soon to part. Indeed, Mrs. Neville's situation, young, beautiful, opulent as she is, appears, in some respects, peculiarly unenviable. She has no very near relations; she has chosen to establish herself in a county she never before inhabited; where every face is new to her, and where it will yet, necessarily, be long ere she forms any permanent friendships. Her establishment is elegant, and her house is calculated for the admission of numerous visitors: but none that she has hitherto received have been people she cared for; and, what is worse, I have heard her acknowledge, that with an immense list of town acquaintance, she has not a single intimate friend! How, and amongst what sort of people, must she have lived? Can any human being be so wholly devoted to dissipation as to omit making some selection from amidst the surrounding crowd? forming some attachment towards the few amiable individuals who may chance to mingle in the herd? Alas! I fear Mrs. Ne-

ville has rather aspired after admiration than friendship; and if such is the case, she already, early as it is, has reason to lament the injudicious choice. Admiration can only be fed, to the satisfaction of its greedy devourers, in large cities, in splendid assemblies, in places of gay and fashionable resort: an insulated country mansion, in a district where the recent purchaser is but little known, is no spot for the gratification of such craving appetites. “Let all,” says Madame de St. Hermine, “who either through folly or misfortune are devoid of family connexions and friends—fast, firm, and affectionate friends—shun the country; it *can* have no charms for them!”

It would really be charity to persuade poor Mrs. Neville of the truth of all this; and the task would not, I fancy, now, be very difficult. She looks languid and listless; her faculties seem benumbed; she has nothing within reach to love, or to feel interested for; as the winter approaches her garden begins to fade; she can neither shoot nor hunt; she cares not a straw for farming; she projects

no alterations in or around her dwelling; she has no permanent and pleasant society within doors; she grows heartily weary of perpetual dinner-parties; she complains, that when riding or driving out, she meets not, in ten miles, with as many living creatures: playing or singing to bare walls fatigues her; painting or drawing to gratify no eye but her own, makes her melancholy; and reading, her favourite sedentary amusement, loses half its charms, when, as she justly observes, however brilliant, touching, or sublime a passage may be, she has no intelligent companion, susceptible of her own enthusiasm, and capable of participating in her feelings. Her emotions, whether of admiration or disgust, pleasure or pain, must all be solitary: every social sentiment lies dormant; all the kind affections of her nature appear suspended.—Ah! who upon such terms would envy the independence of the high-born, high-bred, and beautiful Mrs. Neville!

Sir Henry rallied her upon her grave and dejected looks; she answered him with a faint smile; denied not the truth of the change,

nor took any pains to disperse the cloud that hung upon her brow. He then, with a kindness and good-nature for which I felt inclined to love him, seated himself next to her, and exerted all his powers of entertainment in order to revive her: he gave a most humorous account of some little casualties, as he called them, which had occurred during his late absence from Westhill; described several of the company he had met at the two houses where he had been visiting; told of Lady Tresilian's distress on finding one day, at dressing time, a huge tabby cat asleep upon a new white satin gown her maid had spread out upon a sofa, ready for her mistress to put on; said she had, on another occasion, nearly fainted with vexation and dismay, in consequence of having accidentally spilt a cup of rhubarb and peppermint, with which she was on the point of regaling herself, over the magnificent damask bed-curtains of the chamber in which they slept.

"And these curtains," added he, "were bright blue; the yellow rhubarb, therefore, coming in contact with them, produced as

fine a green as heart could desire ! Lady Treilian turned green with fright ; her maid's eyes, green already, shone now, from the same cause, with the vivid lustre of an emerald ! And as for myself I will not pretend to say what hue I was of ; but certain it is, that, together with their bustle, I found the effluvia of the rhubarb and peppermint so intolerable, I was forced to make interest for another apartment."

Though we laughed at this story, I secretly congratulated myself that I had no witty husband to try my patience by recording every little innocent cup of rhubarb I might think it advisable to take ! Nothing is pleasanter than to hear married people, who are upon good terms, pass jests upon each other : but where the humour is all on one side, and dullness superlative reigns on the other, there seems something cruel and unfeeling in the business.

Mrs. Neville, who is now perpetually talking of her young favourite, Emma Cecil, made a discovery, in the course of the evening, which greatly delighted her. She found

that the little girl's fourteenth birthday, and the anniversary of some important event to herself (Geraldine is angry with me for suggesting that this nameless event may be her release from matrimonial bondage) exactly coincided: and she determined to seize the occasion for giving some little *fête*. This idea did her wonderful good, and she became, for the rest of the evening, as animated as possible. To a ball, Mrs. Neville made various objections herself: to any theatrical representation including *male performers*, Lady Tresilian stoutly opposed her whole rhetoric; it was too late in the year to think of entertaining ourselves *al fresco*; and a common dinner-party, we all agreed, would be as dull a thing as could well be fixed upon by way of peculiar amusement. At length, Madame de St. Hermine, being pressed to give her opinion, performed the part of Shakespeare's Rosalind, and enabled us "to make these doubts all even." Understanding, that amongst the limited number of Emma's accomplishments, speaking French with fluency was the most distinguished, she mentioned a

charming little comedy in that language written by St. Foix, called *Les Graces*, in which there are only six characters: Cupid, who without any great impropriety, might be represented by Miss Cecil; the three Graces, Mercury, and Venus. At the mere mention of *Mercury*—a divinity, we must allow, whose morals are not quite so edifying as might be wished, Lady Tresilian made a most dreadful wry face, and I almost feared our whole scheme would be abandoned: but we all united in assuring her, that a heathen god a little addicted to dissipation, was by no means so scandalous a personage as a vulgar, licentious beau of modern times; that the fictions of mythology, though not always perfectly correct, were certain, at least, of being elegant and ingenious; and Madame de St. Hermine assured her, that the character to which she so much objected, had such a subordinate part to represent, that if her ladyship was absolutely averse to his appearing in proper *costume*, it would not be impracticable to leave him out entirely as a substantial agent, and only to read his speeches.

This plan, however, was zealously opposed by the whole company; and it was, at length, agreed, that poor Mercury should be allowed to retain his station. You see to what dangers an ill name may expose us! Sir Henry Tresilian, to oblige Mrs. Neville, undertook to perform the stigmatized part; and, in consideration of his being the uncle of little Emma, Lady Tresilian seemed tolerably reconciled to the arrangement. Mrs. Everley, very good-humouredly, offered her services in the character of a *dowdy Venus*; and Geraldine, Mrs. Neville, and myself, are to represent the three Graces.

Emma's birthday is on the twenty-third of this month. Ample time, therefore, is allowed to learn our parts, and prepare theatrical dresses and decorations. We are to fit up a little stage *here*, at Mr. Archer's request, who expects an old lady and gentleman on a visit, neither of whom will choose to be out late at night, though both, he assures us, are of a disposition so cheerful, that our projected entertainment will delight them. We purpose enlivening our spectacle by the introduc-

tion of a little dancing and music, and have made out a list of about fifteen or twenty people who are to be invited to the scenic show. They are to know nothing of the matter, however, at present; for we are by no means ambitious of having the scheme talked over in the county, and are quite determined to make it as little of a public representation as possible.

Have I yet satisfied your curiosity, my dear Augusta, as to our actual proceedings? No, you say; I have told you nothing concerning Lord Litchmere. Why—"Nothing can come of nothing." He has seen Geraldine only twice since his return to this part of the world, and his behaviour on both occasions was, as nearly as possible, the same it had been previous to his departure. He converses, exclusively, with her whenever he can *find* or *make* an opportunity: but I can give you no account of what he says, since he invariably seeks to address her *sotto voce*; and if a third person joins them, and attempts engrossing any portion of her attention, he draws back, and becomes nearly silent. Wherever she happens to be, whether

forming part of a group, accidentally placed a little apart, or engaged at the instrument, his usual station is at the back of her chair, watching for a favourable moment to obtain her undivided attention: if unsuccessful, he is patient and quiet; but never discouraged, never diverted from his object. Geraldine gives to these assiduities, no other sanction than common good-breeding exacts; and appears, hitherto, scarcely to have remarked them. Mr. Archer seems prepossessed in his lordship's behalf, and speaks well of him upon all occasions. Dear Madame de St. Hermine adheres firmly to her favourite Les more. I have hinted to her my apprehensions of our new neighbour; she will not hear of them: and, in the warmth of her heart, is almost angry with me for supposing Ferdinand can so easily be supplanted! Yet she does justice to the merit of Lord Litchmere, and says she could do the same with regard to twenty more: "For after allowing to each," she adds, "his due share of approbation, your brother will ever be superior to them all."

I need tell you nothing more of Mrs. Neville's present disposition of mind than you will have collected from the former part of this letter. Yet let me add, that she made of Madame de St. Hermine innumerable inquiries relative to Ferdinand; for though she and I are the best friends in the world, I have always remarked that she is more reserved upon the subject of my brother, when conversing with me, than when addressing any one else. Does she suspect that I should be less inclined to love her as a *sister* than as a friend?

Adieu, my dear Augusta. I shall be very busy the remainder of this week, *learning my part*, and rehearsing, and practising the little figure-dance we are to perform. *A-propos*, we have made a discovery. Cæsar, our poor negro, now perfectly recovered, and in high feather and song, proves to be a very accomplished person. He can dance, we are told by Geraldine's maid, several strange African *pas seuls*, to his own monotonous, savage singing. I have advised Mr. Archer to let him be fantastically dressed up, in order to exhibit one

of those wild specimens of national talent, between the acts of our little play : but my counsel does not prosper. Cæsar, I am persuaded, would not be shy of obliging us, especially if he thought Geraldine wished it. He is become a prodigious favourite throughout the family ; the servants all declare he is the merriest and the best tempered creature that ever existed ; and his behaviour in the drawing-room is so humble and respectful, his countenance so honest and happy, that, black as he is, I begin to think him almost handsome. He has struck up a violent friendship with an enormous Newfoundland dog belonging to the house. This creature is called Pompey ; and it would do your heart good, after the terrible grudge there has been between them these thousand eight hundred and odd years, to witness the amicable terms upon which Cæsar and Pompey now walk about together ! We are all edified by it.

Adieu, once more. I have a letter from Ferdinand, supplicating me to write to him. He is by this time, I suppose, on his way to

Parkton Castle. My mother has been very good to spare us both so long.

Farewel. Yours ever,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER IV.

MISS LESMORE TO FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ.

Highgrove Park,
Oct. 15.

IT is so long, my dear Ferdinand, since I have had occasion to address a regular letter to you, that I feel as if I hardly knew how to accomplish the undertaking. I remember, when you were in Ireland, three or four years ago, I used, after long urging from my mother, to come at last to a desperate resolution—take a sheet of slippery gilt paper, a new clarified pen, and with some pale bluish ink, which I thought made the writing look neater, begin, in my best hand, half way down the page, a formal——“ My dear brother;” then pause; draw my chair nearer the table; straighten the black lines which, for the convenience of writing even, I then snugly used; and after some meditation, joyfully recollect that I had yet put no date. Down then it went,

at the right hand corner of the leaf, and always at full length, as thus: "Parkton Castle, Shropshire, Monday, 3 o'clock, Sept. 23, 18—." Then another long pause, finally succeeded by a beginning to this effect:—"We were very happy to hear you had safely landed at Dublin. Mamma and I were very sorry you had so rough a passage; but we hope the weather will be calmer when you return. I suppose you are very gay at Dublin: we are dull enough here," &c.

Now, having lost all relish for the juvenile simplicity of this style, yet not acquired any other one jot better, I feel a little reluctant to expose myself to such comparisons as you may be pleased to make, between my insipidity at fifteen, and my insipidity at twenty. I assure you I must receive a very speedy answer to this, and a great many encouraging compliments, or my vanity will take the alarm, and I shall wait another four or five years before I venture to address you again.

What do you expect me to say to you? I live under the same roof, it is true, with your fair enslaver; but, as I observe her not with

the quick discerning eye of a lover, I can discover nothing very new or brilliant to tell you concerning her. She looks, as nearly as possible, the same as when you saw her last; visits or receives pretty much the same people; dresses, as well as I can remember, exactly in the same manner, and demonstrates all her accustomed cheerful sweetness of temper. Perhaps, you had rather I had told you she was grown pensive and peevish. In that case, you might have the consolation of flattering yourself her disposition was soured by your absence; but truth compels me, however reluctantly, to declare, she has never plagued us with a single whim, never pouted, never scowled at any body in the house, and that her gaiety,

E'l lampeggiar de l'angelico riso.*

are as genuine and as fascinating as ever.
—Poor Ferdinand!

Well, but may I now profane this paper by talking of any thing else? Much as I love

* And the lightning of her heavenly smile.

her, and gladly as I would oblige you, I must confess it would tire me exceedingly to ring the changes, through a whole letter, upon her dark blue eyes, her chesnut hair, her ruby lips, her dimpled cheeks. All these you could describe to the full as well as myself, I will answer for it; and really nothing else occurs to me, just now, to say of her. So pray let me converse a little about meaner mortals.

Sir Henry and Lady Tresilian, though often absent for a few days, continue to make West-hill their head-quarters. The latter, who, to this hour, remains as harmless and simple as I was when I wrote my former pretty, little, prim letters to you, is not a being of whom it is possible to say ten words, unless you happen to be speaking of her to an utter stranger. Then, it is no bad amusement to describe her formal figure, and precise demeanour; but you are not unacquainted with these attributes: I shall therefore put her upon the shelf, where, if she rested till her husband chose to take her down, I believe she might abide in peace till the day of doom. Sir

Henry is a person of whom more might be recorded, both good and bad: but at present we do not see much of him. I confess, that with all the faults attributed to him, and all those which he permits to be so apparent, I cannot help liking him: he is an odious husband, I allow; yet every now and then, such symptoms of good-nature, and such indications of a naturally well-disposed mind peep forth, that it seems no more than common justice to suppose, he *might* have been as worthy as he is agreeable, had he married any thing better than a breathing automaton. Yet, as he chose her himself, he ought certainly to abide by his half-animated bargain with more decency.

Lord Litchmere, who, like another Nimrod, means this winter to become "a mighty hunter," is established at Rushley. I foretel that he will so effectually clear the county of foxes, that I have been advising Mr. Archer to replenish his poultry court with the rarest and finest birds he can get, as they may now live in perfect security, without the usual precaution of being driven home to roost

every night by the old woman we have so often seen at sun-set, limping after the peafowls, guinea-hens, and turkeys.

We are all on the point of turning actresses, and are, next week, by way of celebrating Emma Cecil's birthday, to represent a little French comedy. Madame de St. Hermine, who enters with spirit into every thing calculated to give others pleasure, makes a very important affair of teaching us to recite our parts with "good accent and discretion." Yet is she not, at this time, in her accustomed spirits. Her son, whom she lately had reason to believe on the point of contracting a very desirable marriage, all at once, has wholly discontinued writing to her: and, by some imperfect accounts she has received from a friend in town, there seems cause to apprehend the match is either unaccountably retarded, or entirely broken off. You, who are well acquainted with Monsieur de St. Hermine, might write to him, or to some common friend, and try to discover the reason of his mysterious silence. I am sure you will take a lively interest in all that con-

cerns a woman you so justly admire: indeed you *ought*; for she loves you, I sometimes think, almost better than her own Albert.

Mrs. Neville has been half resolved upon drowning or poisoning herself. She has had a furious attack of *ennui* and spleen: but the bustle of preparing for our dramatic performance revives her a little. Poor soul! the malady of having nothing to do, and nobody but herself to care for, destroys her by inches! After all, Ferdinand, if Geraldine remains insensible, you must turn your attention to the fair and idle possessor of West-hill. Once upon a time you certainly would not have been averse to such a recommendation: I am not sure you might not be charged with having jilted her abominably; and decidedly think, you ought either to find her another flirt, or to resume the character yourself, at least during the three ensuing gloomy months. When the London season begins, she will be better!

My paper will contain no more nonsense, unless I turn it, and write crossways; and I never yet knew a man who could ever bear

the sight of a letter so filled. They all look sneering and impertinent if they see a miss reading one of these sort of epistles ; and I have made a vow never to open a letter from a long-winded correspondent in presence of any of your saucy sex.

Adieu, my dear brother. Pray be at home to receive me when I return to Parkton Castle, and, for your reward, I will endeavour to bring you some friendly, at least, if not tender message from the fair Geraldine. She now sends her best respects to my mother, and compliments to yourself. Adieu, and believe me your very affectionate sister,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER V.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Oct. 24.

ONCE more I return to my old trade of writing long letters. This will probably be an enormous one: but I shall take my time over it, as we are now, after our recent bustle, so perfectly quiet again, that I may allow myself a week to endite it, without fear of letting events accumulate faster than I can record them.

Our pretty little play was performed last night, to a friendly and select audience, with all the success imaginable. You both, my dear sisters, are well acquainted with the disposition of the apartments in this house. You will therefore understand me, when I describe to you the situation of our tiny theatre. It was erected at one end of the drawing-room, next the folding door that

opens into the library. This latter apartment was converted into a dressing-room for the performers; and here, likewise had been placed our harp and piano-forte. The stage was raised about a foot from the floor, and though not large enough to bring us close to the audience, was of sufficient extent to enable us to move about with convenience and security. We had no painted scenes; but Mr. Archer permitted us to make what use we pleased of his magnificent orange-trees, myrtles, and other green-house plants of various heights and sizes, which, with a quantity of moss, we contrived to arrange in such a manner, as to produce the effect of a luxuriant grove, the exact scene we wanted. The floor, and back of the stage, were covered with green baize; and we had a front curtain suspended to an ornamented frame, on which was painted this motto:

“ Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts *.”

Just before the curtain, was a row of lamps,

* Chorus to King Henry V.

which cast a very brilliant light upon the stage, but were shaded from the company, who sat at as great a distance as the room would permit, upon forms gradually rising one above the other.

The party collected to behold our evening's entertainment, consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Everley, and Colonel Courtville; Lord Litchmere; a Mr. and Mrs. Hanmer, worthy elders, now on a visit here; Sir Henry and Lady Tresilian; Mrs. Fairfax and her pretty daughter; and four or five other neighbours, whose names, I believe, you have never heard me mention.

Except these nameless personages, all the rest of the company above enumerated had dined with us, including Emma Cecil, the intended *Cupid* of the night, and the original cause of this festive undertaking. Mr. Everley, who, you may remember, had once been appointed by Mrs. Neville, poet in ordinary to herself and friends, gave us on this occasion a very appropriate specimen of his ability to fill the office. The verses which I here transcribe, written by him in honour of

Emma's birthday, were presented to her shortly after she arrived.

* The bud first peeping at the world,
 As if unwilling to be seen
 Till all its foliage is unfurl'd,
 The emblem gem of gay fourteen.

And still resemblance further goes ;
 For all that's sweet, and fresh, and clean,
 Which charms us in the early rose,
 Is found in fragrant, gay fourteen.

Ingenuous, artless, void of guile,
 Suspicion, envy, hatred, spleen,
 The age exempted most from bile,
 Is sure good-natur'd, gay fourteen.

Whate'er the features, or the shape,
 The gen'ral countenance or mien,
 They ne'er so well from blame escape
 As at the age of gay fourteen.

If ever free from selfish views,
 And all that's sordid, base, and mean,
 Frail mortals can a bribe refuse,
 'Tis at the age of gay fourteen.

* These lines are the production of a friend.

Then flourish on, thy sweets disclose ;—
 Long on that smiling face be seen
 The beauties of the summer rose,
 The spring-like freshness of fourteen !

These stanzas not only filled the modest little Emma with grateful surprise and delight, but excited in every one who heard them, the warmest approbation ; especially in Sir Henry Tresilian, whose fondness for his well-disposed young charge, renders every testimony of kindness or attention which may be shown to her peculiarly gratifying to him.

Eight o'clock in the evening was the hour fixed upon for *drawing up the curtain*. Every body we expected being arrived, we were waiting, all completely equipped, in our temporary dressing-room, till Madame de St. Hermine should give the signal for the *overture* to begin. Geraldine was already seated at the piano-forte, and I at my harp, when we heard a soft tap at the library door. Emma, in her little heathen dress, ran to open it ; and, preceded by Mr. Archer, who should enter but my brother ?

You will easily conceive the surprise his unexpected appearance excited. That which I experienced, however, was not wholly unmixed with apprehension : a painful suspicion crossed my mind that my mother was ill, and, whilst eagerly inquiring how he had left her, I scarcely dared raise my eyes to his face.

“ Mrs. Lesmore is perfectly well, my dear Julia,” said Mr. Archer, unusually solicitous to answer for him. “ No evil tidings from Par ton Castle have brought your brother hither : but, attracted by the fame of our brilliant theatricals, he is come amongst us to take a peep at them. I feared, however, the sudden sight of such an addition to our audience might cause some little confusion in your memories, and therefore conducted him in a moment, just to shake hands with you, previous to taking his place in pit, box, or gallery, whichever he prefers.”

During this speech, Madame de St. Hermine and Mrs. Neville, had approached and welcomed Lesmore, the one with all her wonted cordiality, the other with the most evident symptoms of satisfaction and plea-

sure. Geraldine, meanwhile, silent and motionless, betrayed, I thought, feelings of embarrassment and vexation.

“What is the matter, my love?” whispered I, leaning over her chair; “are you sorry that Ferdinand is come?”

“To own the truth,” answered she, with a forced smile, “I really am. He will think all this so silly!”

“He is not quite such a churl, I hope: but you are so ready to think ill of him, that you almost deserve I should tell him what you say.”

“O no, no; that would be too severe a punishment for my frankness!”

Just then Ferdinand came towards us, unconscious of what had been passing between us. His first address to her was compounded of a happy mixture of politeness and freedom; the tone of his voice, always peculiarly gentle when he speaks to her, and the sort of half-suppressed, indescribable expression of joy at again beholding her, which sparkled in his eyes, gratified and reassured her. She shook off the momentary chagrin

that had assailed her, and gave to him a reception perfectly cheerful and unconstrained.

Mr. Archer allowed them not long to continue their parley. He reminded us that our friends were all assembled in the adjoining room, and urged us to begin without delay; after which, taking Lesmore by the arm, he was going with him towards the door, when I stopped them a moment, to say to my brother—

“ Did you receive my letter before you left home? And have you attended to the request it contained?”

I alluded to a commission I had given him relative to Madame de St. Hermine's son. He instantly understood me, and, significantly pressing my hand, answered in a low voice—

“ I have: but I entreat you, ask me no questions till we are alone.”

This reply alarmed me, and excited in my mind a thousand unpleasant conjectures: I saw by his looks that he was profoundly in earnest, and trembled for what he might have to disclose. There was no time, however,

to dwell upon vague surmises. Soon after Mr. Archer and he had left us, Madame de St. Hermine, our manager and prompter, rung the little bell which called upon us for the *overture*. I flew to my post; Mrs. Neville stood by us to turn over the leaves; Sir Henry affected to beat time with his *caduceus*; Emma employed herself, for the last time, in re-perusing her part, and we boldly struck up.

From the moment the first chord vibrated upon my ears, the various apprehensions and panics, which, during the last week, had perpetually haunted me, at the thoughts of the undertaking in which we had engaged, vanished as if by magic. A similar revolution took place in Geraldine, and we played almost as firmly as if we had been practising in private. Indeed, she had repeatedly declared, that what her uncle and Madame de St. Hermine sanctioned, and what she had voluntarily agreed to attempt, she was determined to perform with the best grace in her power. I feared for a minute, that the unlooked-for arrival of Ferdinand, would damp her courage: but he has not yet attained suffi-

cient importance in her eyes, for, after he quitted the library, she seemed to forget he was in the house.

I can convey to you no idea of the admirable effect, the spirit, and consequence, she gave to her little part: in her countenance, and in the expression of her voice, there was a sort of chastened archness; a sportiveness so original, yet so delicate; a variety so amusing, and an intelligence so perfect of the author's meaning, that I was more than once in danger of losing my own *cue*, by paying, involuntarily, too much attention to her performance. Mrs. Neville, to do her justice, was delightful also; but her manner gave me more the idea of *acting*; she knew not how to touch any sprightly passage so lightly; gay as she naturally is, yet, in an assumed character, her vivacity was more artificial, her movements, though graceful, were less easy: in short, one gave us the idea of Geraldine really placed in the situation she represented, and speaking without premeditation; the other set before us a studied copy of herself—an imitation, not always advantageous, of Mrs. Neville in her holiday dis-

position. Another circumstance, also, which tended to diminish the pleasure we might have received, was the disparity of her figure, elegant as it is, to the character she personated. Hers is a form and face that would better have suited a majestic Juno, or the “laughter loving” goddess herself, than any of her youthfully-timid, and yet sportive attendants. I will not, however, dwell upon trifling imperfections: upon the whole she sustained her borrowed part most admirably.

But our young Cupid was the prodigy of the night. I shall never cease being surprised at the unexpected powers displayed by a child, naturally so shy, and habitually so curbed. In the first place, she *looked* her character completely; her well-proportioned, yet, for her age, diminutive figure; her extremely pretty, but childish face; her elegant attire; and her young, though distinct and sensible mode of articulation, gave to her such advantages, that whoever saw her, saw the most perfect image of the roguish little deity which mortal eyes can ever hope to be-

hold. By turns submissive and designing—desponding and triumphant—menacing and imploring—she knew how to vary, with every varying sentiment, the inflections of her voice, and the cast of her countenance: but what she represented best, was a certain mutinous and spoilt-child sullenness—a pouting, yet comic importance, the most characteristic and entertaining imaginable. Her pronunciation of the language was pure and correct: she learnt it early of a Parisian native, and nothing could exceed the propriety of her accent.

Now who will take up the pen and say a civil word for Sir Henry, Mrs. Everley, and your poor Julia? Of the first, indeed, I can truly assert, that his dress became him extremely; but his acting was utterly spoilt, by a disposition to laugh, which he several times found it impossible to conquer, and which affected his voice in a very perceptible degree. Mrs. Everley never appeared till the last short scene: and as for me, the part I had chosen, was so insignificant, that I defy even Geraldine to have given it interest or spirit.

Our dresses, made of coloured crape, and the lightest but most brilliant silver tissue, were such as the Graces, whom we dared to personate, would not, I think, on days of gala, have disdained to wear. We each had a wreath of roses bound round our hair ; and baskets of flowers, garlands, &c. were profusely scattered about the stage.

A little air, learnt by ear, and beautifully sung by “ Cupid, prince of gods and men*,” followed by a general dance connected with the subject of the piece, concluded our well-rewarded exertions. The curtain dropped amidst such acclamations of applause as, I believe, were seldom heard in a sober, private house ; and whilst we were yet standing upon the stage, laughing at the flattering uproar, Mr. Archer stole *behind the scenes* to embrace, thank, and praise his lovely niece ! Sir Henry likewise appeared enchanted at the success of Emma Cecil ; who resuming, as soon as her fictitious character was laid aside, all her accustomed diffidence and simplicity, received his caresses and commenda-

* Sentimental Journey.

tions with blushing and unaffected modesty. She is a truly sweet and amiable little creature!

Whilst the two fond uncles were lavishing encomiums upon their respective favourites, Mrs. Neville and I agreed to join the company in the drawing-room. In our way thither, we were met by Ferdinand, Lord Litchmere, and Colonel Courtville. They were all coming to offer to us their tribute of applause; but, finding that Mrs. Neville chose not to be detained, the two latter turned back, and attended her into the drawing-room. Ferdinand pursued his way towards the spot where Geraldine still remained; and I followed him, partly with a view of renewing my inquiries relative to Monsieur de St. Hermine, and partly from a desire of witnessing his first address, after the fall of the curtain, to the fair representative of the sprightly Euphrosyne.

I took hold of his arm, and was beginning to solicit a brief explanation of the mysterious speech he made on his first arrival: but, before he could satisfy my curiosity, Geraldine

and Emma Cecil approached us. Ferdinand immediately quitted me, and, stepping up to the former, said with great animation,

“ Were I to express to you, Miss Fauconberg, half the pleasure your performance of this evening has given me, you would accuse me of extravagance and hyperbole. I have seen, it is true, more impassioned acting, and I have seen more exalted characters : but any thing so sweetly natural, so innocently playful, so just, so well adapted to the elegant and classical being you represented, I had formed no conception of : and but that we could never replace the loss of Miss Fauconberg, I should be tempted to wish her always to appear to us in the semblance of Euphrosyne !”

His voice, his looks, whilst he gave utterance to these sentiments, bore witness to the sincerity with which they were spoken : never did he display more spirit and earnestness.— I saw that Geraldine was struck and surprised by his manner ; her eyes, which at first were directed towards him without embarrassment, gradually bent themselves upon the

ground, her cheeks were suffused with a brighter glow ;—and when he paused, she seemed neither to know what to do with her looks, nor how to utter a single sentence. To relieve her from a confusion which I was well assured must be painful, though it made her look prettier than ever, I now said—

“ You best can tell, my dear brother, how Miss Fauconberg came to imbibe such rigid notions of your sublime wisdom ; but certain it is, that when she first saw you this evening, she repined at your presence, and expressed a fear that you would think us all fools for engaging in such a scheme.”

“ Dear Julia,” cried she, reproachfully, “ why do you tell this ?”

“ To mortify and punish me ;” cried Ferdinand. “ I may have deserved it ; yet I am grieved to find Miss Fauconberg is so tenacious of her right to condemn me ; grieved that she will not endeavour, at least, to entertain more gentle and indulgent thoughts of me.”

Poor Geraldine looked exceedingly foolish ; but whilst she was deliberating what to say, Lesmore turned to Emma Cecil, and ad-

dressed to her a compliment the most flattering and well-deserved: we both joined with him in extolling her admirable performance, and afterwards proceeded together to the drawing-room.

I will not tire you with a repetition of half the courteous things that were said to us the moment we appeared. Perhaps, however, I might, without incurring the risk of fatiguing you, relate the pretty speeches that were made to myself. But the applause, I will not call it flattery, which was poured upon *Euphrosyne*, it would really be a serious labour to record. Her sister Graces were considered but as secondary beings; as satellites to the fair, unrivalled planet. Wherever she turned, all eyes were fixed upon her, and every *heart* even, seemed to delight in seizing the occasion to praise her without restraint.

Were I to moralize upon this subject, I should say, that though her beauty and talents were what called forth, in the present instance, such signal and unanimous marks of favour, yet the distinction she met with had its origin in the general attachment and

benevolence excited by her conciliating disposition, still more than in the admiration awakened by her personal accomplishments. Without courting popularity, except by gentleness of manners and promptitude to oblige, she is throughout the county, both with men and women, the most popular person I ever knew. If her uncle chose to become a candidate for the borough, I think that, by merely allowing her to canvass for him, he would be assured of success.

Lady Trēsilian, though tolerably well pleased, I believe, with the part her niece had borne in the evening's entertainment, was yet by no means soothed into forgetfulness of her accustomed rules. Before we appeared in the drawing-room, the villanous house-clock loudly struck ten. Mrs. Fairfax told me, that the moment her ladyship heard it, she observed her begin to look restless and *fidgetty*: she rung to have her carriage brought to the door; asked whether it was likely Emma would be soon released? and, in short, seemed as anxious to send her home, as if upon her punctual observance of the established

hour depended the happiness of the child's whole future life.

It will not surprise you, after this, to hear, that the little girl had scarcely been five minutes in the room, before her systematic aunt wrapt her up, dressed as she was, quiver, wings, and all, in a huge Indian shawl, and hurried her off to the carriage, in which a maid was waiting to attend her to Westhill. Our united entreaties that the poor little god might be allowed to stay supper, were totally disregarded. Lady Tresilian, as obstinate as he is fabled to be mischievous, declared herself determined on no account to break through her usual regulations. Emma departed, therefore; but with such unmurmuring resignation, that we all felt as much pleased with the sweetness of her temper, as concerned at her disappointment. I think this child partakes of the placid, contented nature of our Geraldine. Yet, how different are their situations, and how differently will they have been brought up! The one, a living proof that some characters *cannot be spoiled*, has been reared in the lap of indulg-

ence, fostered by encouragement ; and, though an orphan from childhood, considered as an object of the first importance by her surviving protector ; adored by his friends ; assured of an ample paternal succession ; and taught, moreover, to consider herself as heiress to the greatest part of his extensive property. These are circumstances, which, according to the usual course of things, are but too well calculated to awaken pride, selfishness, and presumption. Emma Cecil, by what I can understand, though as far as regards the loss of her parents, in a similar predicament, is entitled to little or no fortune, being the youngest of a large family, all dispersed among different relations. So far from being brought forward, and treated with peculiar tenderness, she is, by one of her guardians, steadily repressed, and methodically subdued ; whilst, by the other, she is openly encouraged to rebellion, and with injudicious fondness made a plaything, and exposed to the danger of being made a petulant fool. Yet are both these well-tempered minds exempt from the faults to which their several modes

of education rendered them obnoxious:— with all her present advantages and future high prospects, Geraldine is as humble as Emma, in her comfortless and insecure position, is unrepining and amiable.

We sat down, seventeen or eighteen, to a very elegant supper, the three Graces condescending to forego their nectar and ambrosia for mere mortal dainties; and benignly exerting themselves to prove their title to the high estimation in which they have ever been held.

Our company departed not till twelve o'clock; some of them, indeed, and Mrs. and Miss Fairfax were of the number, remained here all night; the others retired in high glee: and soon after, concluding that the business of the day was over, Geraldine, Madame de St. Hermine, and I were proceeding to our chambers, when Mr. Archer and Lesmore, who alone remained down stairs, called us back, and entreated us to allow them a few minutes' conversation. We looked at each other with some surprise, but immediately complied, and proceeded with them into the study.

There, Mr. Archer took Madame de St. Hermine aside, and whilst, in a low voice, he communicated to her what he had to say, my brother, addressing himself to Geraldine, said,

“ I have delayed informing you and my sister of the unpleasant intelligence of which I am the bearer, until your friends were gone, and the gaiety of the evening was over. I can now no longer conceal from you what Mr. Archer is at this moment reluctantly announcing to Madame de St. Hermine:—her son, I fear, is seriously indisposed, and it will be necessary for her immediately to take a journey to town.”

“ Oh, dearest Madame de St. Hermine !” exclaimed Geraldine, “ how I grieve for the distress these tidings will give her!—She shall not go to town alone, however: I am sure my uncle will not refuse to let me accompany her, at a time when my presence may, perhaps, sooth and support her !”

“ Your presence, dear Miss Fauconberg,” resumed Ferdinand, “ would indeed, on any other occasion, be a support the most cheer-

ing and consolatory ; but in this case it would be of little avail to her, and the journey would be wholly improper for you. Monsieur de St. Hermine is ill at an hotel, from whence he cannot be at present removed, and where, of course, his mother will establish her abode. To me this circumstance is immaterial, and I travelled hither from Parkton Castle with the news, solely for the purpose of offering my attendance to Madame de St. Hermine, as well during her journey, as after her arrival in town."

Geraldine, anxious and afflicted as she was, could not be insensible to the kindness of such a plan. In the openness of her heart, she laid her hand unconsciously upon Ferdinand's arm, and, regarding him with the most grateful approbation, said, " This is being a friend, indeed ! How much are we all indebted to you for such a thought ! "

Lesmore, pleased and affected by the frankness of her manner, and the expressive softness of her voice and countenance, gently raised her hand to his lips, but did not immediately speak. Geraldine appeared a little

startled by this action; a transient blush crossed her cheek, and she instantly sought to disengage herself: yet not so much with displeasure and abruptness, as with shame at having apparently invited the freedom.

“From whom, my dear Ferdinand,” said I, “had you the news of Monsieur de St. Hermine’s illness?”

“From a lady to whom I am an utter stranger; a Mrs. Selforth, whose daughter, we lately heard, he was upon the point of marrying. I had, in consequence of what I learnt from you, written immediately to Albert himself, and to another friend, now accidentally in town. Mrs. Selforth, who, I imagine, was with him when my letter arrived, opened it at his desire, and then undertook, as his amanuensis, briefly to inform me of his illness, but without entering into any detail. By the same post I received a more explicit account, from the other correspondent to whom I had applied. His communication, I own, alarmed me considerably.”

We entreated him to explain himself; and, lowering his voice, he added, “Monsieur de

St. Hermine has been engaged in an affair of honour; he is himself wounded, I believe severely: but his antagonist has been so much a greater sufferer, that his life, it is feared, is in danger."

"Oh, what accumulated horrors! How will this news wring his poor mother's heart!"

"We must hope the best," cried Ferdinand, endeavouring to reassure her; "they may both recover: even before we reach town, the danger may be past.—At all events, I beseech you, my dear Miss Fauconberg, for Madame de St. Hermine's sake, to moderate your apprehensions: to see you thus agitated, will increase her own alarm."

"For the world would I not do that!" cried she, speaking more calmly.—"But, indeed, the account you give is truly dreadful! A young man in a foreign country, with few friends, and no established reputation, to engage in so desperate an affair, and reduce his opponent to such extremity, is, for his surviving connexions, a blow heavier than any he could inflict!—Oh, Mr. Lesmore! if his adversary should die, what will become of the

unfortunate Albert, and his still more unfortunate mother!"

"You view this business in too tremendous a light," cried Ferdinand; "I entreat you to subdue these terrors. Be assured that no exertion it may be in my power to make for Monsieur de St. Hermine's advantage shall be neglected or omitted. I feel sanguine in my hopes of a favourable termination to this affair: endeavour to participate in these cheering expectations. You know not how it grieves me to have inflicted upon you so much pain."

"You are very good, and I thank you most sincerely for the interest you take in this alarming transaction. The greatest consolation I shall have, will be the reflection that Madame de St. Hermine is attended and advised by so kind a friend. When does she begin her journey?"

"Your uncle has already given orders for every thing to be in readiness by day-break. We shall travel post, and probably reach town, at an early hour, the day after to-morrow."

Mr. Archer now joined us; and Geraldine seeing Madame de St. Hermine, the very image of melancholy, seated near a table, her head resting upon her hand, ran and threw her arms round her neck. They both remained silent some time; at length Madame de St. Hermine, rising and taking her young friend's arm, said,

“Come, my gentle comforter, come with me to my room, and assist me in giving directions concerning what I ought to take with me. Good night, my benevolent and excellent Lesmore! My heart thanks you for your generous attention.” Then, holding out her hand to me, she added, “Come with us, dear Julia: let me see all I can of my two beloved girls before I leave them.”

I flew to her, grateful for the permission; and we proceeded together to her apartment.

There, whilst her maid was employed in packing up, her first care was to entreat, that I would immediately write to my mother for leave to remain with Geraldine during her absence.

“The peaceful tenour of this dear child's

short but happy life," said she, fondly encircling her kind arms around her, "has hitherto been exempt, beyond the common lot, from inquietude and sorrow. It comes not to her now in its least formidable shape: I know her generous heart, and I know its first pang will rather be aggravated than lessened, from the circumstance of its being indirectly inflicted, and, as it were, through the bosom of another. Stay with her then, my dear Julia, during this period of trial, and assist her in supporting her anxiety for her friend. Griefs merely personal, I believe, she could better bear."

We both wept at this maternally affectionate speech. How high, yet how just, an opinion did it indicate of her pupils excellence! I promised all she required, and my ready compliance seemed to give relief to her heart. She spoke of my brother in such terms of praise and regard, as again drew tears, but of delight and exultation, from my eyes: and Geraldine observing my emotion, tenderly kissed me, saying,

“ He is a true Lesmore !”

“ Would that I, who am one of the number,” cried I, “ were half as good !”

“ You are every thing, dear Julia,” said Madame de St. Hermine, kindly, “ that the sister of such a brother, the daughter of such a family, ought to be ! I look around me in vain for any other young person so deserving to be the friend of my innocent Geraldine. With you, her pure principles, her simple manners, her uncontaminated heart, are not only safe from perversion, they are even confirmed and improved. Leaving her with you, I leave her with her second self. And now, my dear children, let me dismiss you for the night. Take care of each other ; write to me often ; and give me your best wishes for the speedy dispersion of the heavy cloud now lowering over my head.”

In vain did Geraldine, in vain did we both, entreat she would permit us to remain with her at least till she was ready to go to rest. She would not hear of it ; but agreed to our rising in order to see her in the morning ; and

with renewed benedictions and caresses, sent us both away.

We were dressed before five o'clock, and met at Madame de St. Hermine's door. She was already gone down, and we hastened to join her in the library.

Ferdinand had anticipated us; we found them hastily taking their coffee, and anxious to be gone. The chaise was at the door, and Lesmore's servant was every moment expected, to say that all was ready.

Poor Madame de St. Hermine's countenance too plainly told the ~~wretched and sleepless~~ night she had passed. Geraldine contemplated her with the deepest concern. She found room for herself on the same chair, and whilst she affectionately kissed her hand, said,

"You will write to me, I am sure, as soon as you are able."

"Perhaps," replied Madame de St. Hermine, "I may leave it to this good and dear friend," looking at Ferdinand, "to give the first account of me. When I am agitated

and distressed, I find no task so difficult as that of writing, even to those I best love."

"Well, then, Mr. Lesmore," resumed Geraldine, "we shall depend upon you for the earliest intelligence possible."

"Depend upon me," cried he, "for the punctual performance of every thing which I think may give you pleasure."

"Your sister, Mr. Lesmore," said Madame de St. Hermine, "has consented to write home for permission to defer her departure till my return. Will your mother think us encroachers upon her indulgence?"

"I will venture to answer for her cheerful acquiescence. She will not be alone; my sister Lumley and her little girl, are expected at Parkton Castle every day, and will remain there a fortnight or three weeks."

"But Julia wished so much," said Geraldine, "to be at home when Mrs. Lumley and her child paid their long-expected visit! I cannot bear that she should, on my account, be deprived of such a pleasure!"

"Yet, here I am determined," cried I, "for the present to remain! I shall see my

sister again in the spring. I know she is well, and I take it for granted my young namesake is a beauty: as I cannot, therefore, be in two places at once, pleasant as the faculty might be, I shall content myself with staying quietly where I am."

Intelligence was now brought that the carriage was ready. Ferdinand, desirous of sparing the feelings both of Madame de St. Hermine and her pupil, took the former by the hand, saying, as he led her towards the door,

"Repeat not your farewels, but have the courage to part at once."

Geraldine, however, flew after them, and, bursting into tears, flung herself into Madame de St. Hermine's arms. Neither of them could speak—neither of them seemed able to tear herself from the other; till Ferdinand, whose own eyes glistened, making me a sign to approach, I forcibly detained poor Geraldine, whilst he drew away his distressed fellow-traveller. "Adieu, adieu!" was all they had time to utter. Lesmore closed the library door after him; and Geraldine, too rational,

in the midst of her affliction, to attempt following them, leaned her head upon my shoulder, and remained weeping upon the very spot where she had been separated from her friend.

It is now more than ten years since she has been divided from Madame de St. Hermine, even for a single day. Their exemplary and unaffected attachment to each other is well known; but when, in addition to that, the melancholy apprehensions attending this parting are considered, the grief of Geraldine not only becomes natural—it is a just and grateful tribute of affection to one of the most invaluable and excellent friends—it shows that she experiences for Madame de St. Hermine the feelings that a tender daughter would have for an affectionate mother.


I have exerted myself to the utmost to tranquillize and sooth her; and I need not add, that she is fully sensible of the friendly motives by which I am actuated. When, indeed, was Geraldine ever unmindful of the slightest effort to afford her consolation, or to serve her in any possible manner? And

where is the heart that could be callous to her sorrows from whatever source they spring? She, whose principal object in life is to impart happiness to all around her? Who feels so tenderly for the distresses of every son or daughter of adversity? She struggles against giving indulgence to dejection; and, though not so animated as usual, is calm and composed; attentive as ever to her uncle's guests; and anxious to leave no hour of the day unoccupied and useless.



Mrs. Fairfax and her daughter are gone home. But there still remains here a venerable pair, Mr. and Mrs. Hanmer, the most cheerful, indulgent, and truly amiable old people I ever knew. They have already been with us nearly a week, and the longer I am acquainted with them, the greater is my respect for their benevolent characters. They are particularly kind to me, as being the friend of Geraldine, whom they have known all her life, and seem to consider as their own child, following her with approving looks

whenever she is in sight, and speaking of her with a warmth of affection, that would alone have disposed me to love, had I discovered in them no other excellence. Geraldine's behaviour to them is delightful; without neglecting any one else, her attention to them both is unremitting: and in giving up a large portion of her time to their amusement, her cheerfulness and alacrity evidently show that she attributes to herself no merit for what she does, but derives as much pleasure from their society, as she is capable of affording in return. They have both been accustomed to live in the great world; are naturally penetrating and observant; have made reading their favourite amusement; and are full of anecdotes of the living, and allusions to the works, at least, of the dead.



BUT now, my dear Augusta, if, after all I have said, my conduct still requires an apology, where shall I find one? You know my reasons for not meeting you as I intended at

Parkton Castle. I own the disappointment of this hope gives me much concern : yet, ought I to prove myself a mere “ summer friend ?” After being *fêted* and caressed with unexampled kindness during three gay months, can I, on the first appearance of anxiety and sadness, make my retreat, and forsake one who, to become a solace and comforter to me, would, I sincerely believe, resist all temptation, and renounce all pleasure ?—No ; you could not forgive me were I capable of such ingratitude : and besides, I am here in so good a school to learn the virtue of conquering selfishness, that it were a shame I should not profit by what I see so constantly practised. Geraldine, however, in despite of all I can say, is at times very uneasy at my having made for her, what she calls, so great a sacrifice : we have had many arguments upon the subject : but common honesty will not allow her to say, she feels herself incapable of performing as much for me ; so, being driven to distress, she finds it expedient to let me start some other conversation.

We expect no letters from town before Monday, at the soonest. May they prove consolatory and propitious!

Adieu, dearest Augusta,

J. LESMORE.

LETTER VI.

MISS LESMORE TO THE SAME.

Oct. 27.

No tidings yet, nor, indeed, could we reasonably hope for any. Our travellers, probably, only arrived in town yesterday. Having nothing better to do, however, I will give you some account of our proceedings since Madame de St. Hermine left us.

To begin with what we have *not* done; we have never been from home except to take a drive in the morning with Mr. and Mrs. Hanmer; or when we return (a little perished) from these excursions, to take a run in the Park. I believe I have already told you, that our present guests have a great objection to being out late in the evening; and, on that account, all recent invitations have been declined. We have seen as much as usual of our friends, however: the Everleys were here yesterday; Mrs. Neville paid us a visit this morning; and Lord Litchmere, in the

character of *Amico della casa*, comes and goes as his fancy directs him. He is really amiable; and I *could* be much gratified by his society, were he less evidently attached to Geraldine's! These last two evenings, he has been with us from eight o'clock till eleven; he detests cards; Geraldine is not in spirits to sing and play as usual; so, to fill up the time, as I had heard Mrs. Neville speak highly of his abilities as a reader, I ventured to propose his taking a volume of Shakespeare's Historical Plays, and reading to us while we worked. Geraldine seemed to approve the plan, and he immediately consented to it. He acquitted himself much to our satisfaction; but not quite so well as I expected: he wants ease and nature; his articulation is too mouthing and pompous; he has not sufficient variation of inflection; and, if he ever comes across a quaint, sarcastic, or sportive passage, he absolutely murders it! We have regretted, since we find him so tractable, that we had not rather put Milton into his hands, the grave, majestic, and lofty style of whose verse and subject, would better have

suiting our noble lecturer, than the characteristic and richly diversified dialogue of our inimitable Shakespeare. How few are capable of giving due expression to sentiments of archness and humour, in proportion to the number who are able to pour forth a solemn and sonorous period with adequate propriety! I scarcely ever heard a comedy well read: but a good, bloody, storming tragedy, there are few, amongst those at all conversant with blank verse, who do not succeed in delivering with tolerable dignity. After all, Young's high-sounding, gloomy Night Thoughts would, perhaps, have been the properest book to intrust to Lord Litchmere's perusal.

Mrs. Hanmer and I were left together this morning nearly an hour, whilst Geraldine was writing letters for her uncle, who has slightly hurt his hand. She made many inquiries relative to Lord Litchmere; spoke very favourably of him, and professed to have heard the highest character attributed to him wherever he was known; but at the same time observed, that his coming perpetually to the house upon so intimate a footing, would give

rise to reports and conjectures in the county which it might be difficult to silence.

“Has Mr. Archer, do you think,” she added, “any wish to encourage his addresses?”

“I hope not!” answered I, with an unguarded warmth, which the next moment made me colour.

She perceived it, and smiled.

“Be not alarmed at your own frankness,” resumed she, “I will take of it no unfair advantage. It is not unknown to me that there has been a family treaty on foot between your mother and Mr. Archer. On hearing of Mr. Lesmore’s long residence here this summer, we concluded that every thing was arranged, and daily expected to hear the negotiation was made public. How is it, then, that Lord Litchmere has gained such firm footing in the house, and seems so partially countenanced by all its inhabitants?”

There is a benignity, an openness, in the countenance and language of this excellent old lady, that irresistibly disposes me to confidence and reliance. I gradually stated to her the plain truth: that is, informed her of the inauspi-

cious outset poor Lesmore had made; the subsequent indifference conceived for him by Geraldine; his hourly decreasing prejudices, and increasing admiration; and, finally, his recent avowal to me of the attachment he now feels for her.

“ But that attachment,” continued I, “ may have been conceived too late. Mr. Archer, disgusted by my brother’s original coldness, may, perhaps, intend to dissolve the conditional engagement he had formed. Geraldine herself may object to the connexion; in short, there are so many reasons for apprehension on our side, and, on that of Lord Litchmere, there appear so many for hope, that, I own, his presence here gives me at all times the liveliest inquietude.”

“ Be of good courage,” said Mrs. Hammer, after cordially thanking me for the candour of my communication. “ Lord Litchmere, with all his recommendations of birth, character, and fortune, is little calculated to inspire tenderness. No woman could deny him her esteem and good opinion; but there are few whose hearts he has any probability

of touching, though I believe he is himself capable of conceiving a very deep-rooted and lasting passion. Your brother, without taking half the pains, appears to me infinitely more secure of success. There is so much more ease and spirit in his manners and countenance; his exterior advantages are, beyond comparison, so much superior; his accomplishments are so striking and uncommon; and his resources of conversation and powers of pleasing are so much greater, that, when he earnestly and assiduously lays siege to her heart, he can scarcely fail of conquest."

'These flattering sentiments in favour of Lesmore, coincide so precisely with those entertained by Madame de St. Hermine, and proceed from so rational and impartial an observer, that they fortify all my best hopes, and nearly dispel every apprehension. Adieu, dear Augusta,

Yours affectionately,

J. L.

LETTER VII.

FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ. TO MISS LESMORE.

Oct. 27.

ASSURED of your impatience, my dear Julia, to receive tidings which may give relief to the anxiety of Miss Fauconberg, I lose not a moment in informing you, that the account transmitted to me of the dangerous state of Monsieur de St. Hermine's antagonist was much exaggerated. I know this intelligence will, with reason, tranquillize her mind more effectually than any other I could communicate. Its effect upon Madame de St. Hermine has been salutary beyond description; she appears equal to every other trial; and what remains to be communicated to you, though mortifying in the highest degree, scarcely seems, comparatively speaking, to affect her at all.

The duel which gave us so much alarm, and which Albert, I believe, engaged in very reluctantly, was fought with Mr. Selforth, the

brother of his mistress ; a furious and insolent young man, in whose guardianship she was left at the death of her father, and in whose custody, till she is of age, her fortune inevitably remains. Their mother, a well-meaning, perhaps, but weak and misjudging woman, is the origin of all the mischief and alarm that has ensued. She is the widow of a merchant, by whom, though her children have been amply provided for, she herself has been left in very moderate circumstances, and usually resided, with an only daughter, at a small house near Kensington. The son, an officer in the Guards, and by much too fine a gentleman to trouble himself more than he could help either about his mother or sister, inhabits a handsome and commodious dwelling at the west-end of the town ; drives his four in hand through every fashionable street ; parades up and down the vicinity of St. James's in his regimentals, and often, for weeks, nay months together, neither visited, nor, perhaps, recollected the existence of his less conspicuous relations.

By some means or other, Albert de St. Hermine became acquainted in the course of the summer with Mrs. and Miss Selforth. His vivacity, his foreign manners and descent, circumstances which might have alarmed some matrons encumbered with the care of a handsome daughter, were, in the eyes of Mrs. Selforth, so many recommendations in his favour. She had once been abroad herself for a few months; she could talk of Paris; its theatres, its fashions, its various amusements, with rapturous retrospection; and was fondly devoted to every thing which recalled to her mind scenes and times she so much loved to describe. Albert obtained the free *entrée* of her house; and whenever he had a disengaged evening he spent it at Kensington. Sometimes he met other company there; very frequently he found the mother and daughter by themselves; but not once did he obtain sight of the brother, though occasionally he heard him mentioned.

Miss Selforth, a simple, innocent, and very beautiful girl; but utterly incapable of

supplying, by the strength of her own understanding, the deficiencies of that of her mother, attempted no means of checking the assiduities of their young visitor ; who, at length, without meriting the accusation of presumption, so countenanced and encouraged, declared himself in form, and sued for the daughter's hand. The proposal was frankly accepted ; no doubts of young Selforth's consent appeared to be entertained : and Albert, charmed with his brightening prospects wrote without delay to announce them to his mother.

On applying, however, to the haughty soldier, a task which the ladies took upon themselves, all that could be obtained was a coarse and positive negative, accompanied by many arrogant and insulting reflections upon his mother's partiality in favour of foreigners, her love of flattery, and her unfitness to have the direction of his sister's conduct. Provoked and irritated by such language, Mrs. Selforth determined to disregard a prohibition so offensively expressed ; she concealed from Albert her son's unfavourable an-

swer, and, hastening the match, requested only, for reasons which she hereafter promised to explain, that it might be as private as possible. Monsieur de St. Hermine consented to this without animadversion or inquiry. The young lady's fortune, amounting to ten thousand pounds, is so secured, that on her coming of age, whether she marries with or without her brother's consent, he cannot withhold it from her. Such settlements as Mrs. Selforth deemed proper for her daughter, were drawn up, and willingly signed by the parties concerned; and the marriage, in due form, actually took place about ten days or a fortnight since.

Then it was that the unsuspecting bridegroom was first informed of his brother-in-law's adverse dispositions. He regretted the necessity of being upon bad terms with one to whom he was now so nearly connected; but was either too much in love, or too disinterested, to express any disappointment at being debarred from the immediate possession of his wife's property. Mrs. Selforth behaved with great liberality and kindness: she offer-

ed the young couple an apartment in her own house till they were able to fit up one for themselves; and, equally delighted with her new relation, and with the success of her projected defiance of her son, published the marriage to all her friends, and exulted in her daughter's choice.

Monsieur de St. Hermine, who immediately took up his abode at Kensington, was there in the act of writing to inform his mother of the recent event; his wife was seated by him; and, at the same table, Mrs. Selforth was composing an angry and reproachful epistle to her son; when that son, as little desired as expected, rode up to the door. A rumour of his sister's marriage had just reached him; and, in the first heat of passion, he had galloped to his mother's, to assure himself of the fact, and thunder forth his anathema. Whether Monsieur de St. Hermine was at the house, he neither knew nor cared: all he seemed to have in view, was the giving full scope to his useless fury.

The scene that followed I will not detail: thus much only let me say:—Whatever ties

might bind, whatever circumstances might call for forbearance, no man could long have submitted to the insolence, derision, and violence displayed on this occasion by Mr. Selforth. Albert, though spirited, is neither passionate nor rash; and I am convinced, from motives of tenderness to his wife, would command his resentment to the utmost. But, at length, enraged equally with his inveterate adversary, they rushed out of the house together; Mrs. Selforth vainly endeavouring to stop them—her daughter remaining senseless upon the floor!

These are very horrid particulars, and the soft hearts of the two friends at Highgrove Park, I well know, will ache as they peruse them. But, brothers as these young men now were, they were personally strangers; many causes tended to disunite them; and the newly-formed connexion, far from operating with conciliating influence, was the chief cause of their enmity.

The contest was decided, without witnesses or seconds, in a retired part of Kensington Gardens. Both were wounded, but, con-

trary to the first information I received, Mr. Selforth much the least severely. He was able, after his opponent fell, to walk, unassisted, to a hackney-coach, in which he had the humanity to drive to a surgeon's, acquaint him with what had passed, and direct him where to find the wounded Albert. The surgeon hastened to the spot, and, not knowing how better to dispose of him, being ignorant of his name and abode, caused his patient to be removed to the nearest hotel; from whence, as soon as Albert was able to speak, he desired that intelligence of his situation might be conveyed to Mrs. Selforth. She repaired to him immediately: but without permitting her daughter to accompany her. Nothing can exceed the care and tenderness with which she has attended him throughout his whole illness. The state of his wound has hitherto rendered it impossible, or at least dangerous, to remove him; yet has she scarcely ever quitted his bed-side. Poor woman! she pays dearly for her précipitancy both in forming the match, and in rendering it public! Her son, alarmed at the report of Albert's preca-

rious condition, secludes himself as much as possible, under pretence of indisposition; and seems in great dread of what might ensue, should the object of his vengeance be its victim. His own wound, a slight one in the shoulder, is, I am told, nearly healed. Very few persons are acquainted with the affair; and amongst those few, I meet with none who do not entirely cast the blame of this fray, first upon Mrs. Selforth's imprudence, and next upon her son's arrogance and imperiousness.

Madame de St. Hermine actually fills the post about the person of Albert, which Mrs. Selforth previously occupied. We had considerable difficulty in tracing him to his present abode: but when we *did* discover him, our researches were most amply repaid, by the joy which the sight of his mother, in particular, gave him. He wished her not to be informed of what had passed, till assurances could be sent to her that he was in a state of convalescence. He declares himself wonderfully benefited by her presence; and she every hour rejoices more and more that she

undertook the journey. His wound, I fear, will be slow in healing; but his mind seems easy and cheerful: and were he allowed, he would often converse more than his friendly surgeon deems advisable or safe.

I have had the honour of being presented to his young bride. Miss Fauconberg, were she to behold her, would immediately exclaim, "How beautiful a subject she would be for a miniature picture!" Madame de St. Hermine is charmed with her appearance; with her unformed but innocent manners; and with a sort of bashful, yet inquisitive look, that gives to her an air of inexperienced wonder at every thing she hears and sees. I suspect, however, that neither the temper nor the understanding are quite equal to the lovely face and figure. There is no characteristic expression in her countenance except about the brow, which contracts with incredible celerity on the slightest opposition, and denotes a spirit extremely prompt to, what I have heard my mother call, *take miff*. The understanding that accompanies these capacious dispositions is seldom good.

My journey hither, as affairs are now situated, will prove of less utility than there was reason to suppose it would.

Had Mr. Selforth, indeed, been in the perilous state that was described to me, Albert would have found himself in a very awkward predicament; and all the support his friends could have given him, and exertion they could have made in his behalf, would have been requisite effectually to serve him. I am far from regretting, however, the step I took. My attendance, certainly, was a consolation to Madame de St. Hermine; and, though I do not profess to be very intimate with her son, I have reason to believe he felt gratified at seeing me. I shall, therefore, set up my tent in town for a week or ten days; nay, perhaps, till Albert's recovery is sufficiently advanced to enable me to have the pleasure of escorting his mother back into the country.

Now, my dear Julia, a word or two upon the subject of your hitherto unanswered letter. Think me not ungrateful for having neglected sooner to thank you for it; but be-

lieve me when I assure you, I was extremely pleased with this first specimen of your improved style since the days of "slippery paper, pale ink, and black lines." You write as you speak—cheerfully, unaffectedly, and kindly. I need not remind you of the pleasure with which I always converse with you: imagine, then, that I have the same—nay, heightened as it is by absence—still greater pleasure in reading any of your letters. The fertility of your fancy would, I doubt not, always enable you to find materials for filling a sheet: but, without having recourse to fancy, you have actually before your eyes, a palpable, real, and living subject, more interesting to me than any the brilliant imagination even of a poet could suggest!

Adieu. Say every thing for me that is most affectionate and respectful to Mr. Archer. To Miss Fauconberg I dare dictate no message—I should so easily fall into the error of saying too much! Yet, tell her, that surrounded as she is with admirers, beloved and valued as she is by all who have the hap-

piness of knowing her, no one prizes and re-
veres her with greater fervour and sincerity
than your truly affectionate brother,

FERDINAND LESMORE.

Write soon, I entreat; and direct to me at
my mother's house in town.

LETTER VIII.

MISS LESMORE TO FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ.

Highgrove Park,
Oct. 30.

You have given us all great consolation, my dear Ferdinand, and we are very thankful for your speedy and circumstantial communication: not that I mean to say, we are glad to hear poor Albert is the suffering hero of the tale, and Mr. Selforth the unpunished aggressor! Could the latter have more severely expiated his headstrong violence without risk to Monsieur de St. Hermine from the molestations of justice, I really should not have been sorry: it does very well sometimes to make these turbulent spirits smart for their brutality. But as it is, I think it better, though somewhat more inglorious, to be playing the part of a wounded knight, attended upon his restless couch by grieving ma-

trons and a tender consort, than, with more triumphant success, to be liable to the rough comforts of a prison, or the inconveniences of an abrupt flight.

You say very pretty things of my last letter, and give very intelligible hints as to the subject you wish me to choose for my next. It is hard that a genius of my sublimity should thus be circumscribed in its flights. The whole of your letter, however, was written with a view of being read by *other* eyes than mine; its beginning evidently announces it: but with openness and simplicity. Its conclusion, more covert and artificial, less deserved to be so honoured. Yet, such as it was—bidding me *not* to say—then requesting I *would* say—its allusions to *interesting objects*—and its flummery about *soft hearts*, (you care a great deal about the softness of *my* heart!) I put it, after a slight perusal, into Geraldine's hand. She had been devouring it with her eyes the whole time I had held it, and asking so many questions about Monsieur de St. Hermine, and his mother, and his wounded adversary, that she

completely confused and bewildered me. I just saw that Selforth was safe and Albert not dead, and then desired her to satisfy her own curiosity. Suspecting, very justly, that she had prevented my understanding two thirds of its contents, she began reading the letter aloud. Nothing could be clearer and plainer than her utterance throughout the whole epistle: what species of flattery she requires, I will not pretend to say; but certain it is, there was nothing in the present dose she found any difficulty in swallowing, or seemed to think at all too potent. She smiled and blushed a little at the words, "I should so easily fall into the error of saying too much!" Yet, immediately proceeded without the least hesitation; and, her task concluded, said,

"I never look back, but as to a dream, to the time when I was afraid of your brother. He has the best and most friendly of human hearts! What ease and satisfaction this letter gives me—I feel quite renovated and exhilarated by it!"

"And so she proved herself, for never did I

behold her in spirits more buoyant than she appeared throughout the rest of the day.

Mrs. Neville rode over here about half an hour after your letter arrived. *She* likewise was in exuberant good-humour; but from a cause not quite so meritorious. She has persuaded Sir Henry Tresilian, who, with his lady, is at length gone home, to leave Emma Cecil at Westhill. Nothing can exceed the exultation with which she speaks of her success in this affair. She held forth upon it so long, and with such glee, that Geraldine, whose sense of justice was, perhaps, a little wounded, at length said,

“But how did Lady Tresilian approve this arrangement? In her own way she appears very fond of Miss Cecil.”

“Yes, *in her own way*, as you observe, so she is! However, her consent was asked, and, for aught I know, obtained. Sir Henry managed it all; and at her departure, I saw not that she looked more dismal or forlorn than usual.”

Now, my dear brother, we, who admire Mrs. Neville *almost* as much as you once did,

are sorry she has taken this step. It is not a generous one ; and, I sincerely believe, must have given Lady Tresilian as much pain as she is capable of feeling. Emma, whom we saw this morning, unconsciously acknowledged it. We congratulated ourselves on the prospect of retaining her amongst us this winter ; and the child expressed infinite delight at being committed to the protection of Mrs. Neville, but added,

“ I was very sorry, though, to part from my aunt. You cannot think how kind and good she was to me the morning she left us ! I hardly knew before that she loved me so much ! ”

We forbore asking the ingenuous little girl any questions ; but, in all probability, should have heard, if we had, that Lady Tresilian submitted to this measure with great reluctance. And who can wonder ? Emma was almost her only comfort.—With a husband who despises her, weak health, no family of her own, and a character so insignificant that the world nearly overlooks her, the guardianship and society of this child,

must have been an invaluable resource. And what advantages, from which she was withheld by her aunt, can Emma derive from her residence at Westhill? How few good masters can be procured at such a distance from any large town; and how little will she be benefited by the treatment of one protectress more than by that of the other. Lady Tresilian, if she gave her no high cultivation, at least accustomed her to habits of docility, diffidence, and modesty. Mrs. Neville may, perhaps, endeavour to make her more accomplished; but, at the same time, will infuse into her mind ideas never entertained before of her own consequence; bring her forward in society; set her an example of unsteadiness, both in temper and pursuits; and, very probably, restore her to her natural friends not half so amiable as she found her.

Can you forgive all this croaking, and the freedom with which I venture, on the present occasion, to censure your old favourite? I really love her. She has a thousand admirable qualities; a noble openness of temper;

an unaffected liberality of spirit; and, an affectionate and feeling heart. Yet has she, towards poor Lady Tresilian, indicated utter hardness and insensibility. Every body blames her who knows the circumstances of the case: we say as little as we can help, but are unable warmly to defend her. Without suspecting it, however, she has done her late guest one essential service:—she has literally rendered Lady Tresilian interesting!

Geraldine has finished the miniature of Colonel Courtville, which you beheld with such alarm. Were I unacquainted with the original, I should be tempted to fall in love with his resemblance: but fine features connected with so mawkish a mind, lose all power of fascination. The picture will be given to Mrs. Everley, so make yourself perfectly easy. The indefatigable paintress has now done me the honour to begin one of me.

We yesterday saw at church, and as we were coming out, spoke to your pretty Mary. She looks cheerful and happy: her marriage is to take place very speedily, and we told

her, we hoped you would be here to dance at her wedding. The sound of your name brought a glow of gratitude and pleasure into her cheeks.

“Is Mr. Lesmore coming down again, ladies?” inquired she.

“We hope so.”

“Ah, then, William and I shall have nothing more to wish!”

We shook hands with her, wishing her joy of her happy prospects, and got into the carriage. Mr. Archer, to whom we repeated what the good girl said, protested that you *ought* to be present at the wedding.

“He has been the chief instrument of its success,” added he, “and, to crown his work, he really owes to them the honour and gratification of his presence.”

There, friend, could you desire stronger encouragement to do exactly what you most wish?

Geraldine writes herself to Madame de St. Hermine, and I shall insert a few lines in her letter: I therefore trouble you with no messages to her. We were much amused with

your description of the young bride; but are sorry, for poor Albert's sake, that she has so ill-boding a brow! Mr. Archer, however, laughs, and, with true John Bullism, observes, that if she is pretty, she will do for a Frenchman!

Pray write again soon to inform us of the progress of Monsieur de St. Hermine's recovery. Adieu, my dear brother.

Yours ever affectionately,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER IX.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Nov. 12.

I TRANSMITTED to you, my dear Augusta, and I hope you have safely received, an abstract from Ferdinand's first letter after his arrival in town. We have had a short one since, giving a very favourable account of Monsieur de St. Hermine's gradual amendment; and to-day, Geraldine has written, at her uncle's desire, to invite the invalid and his bride to accompany Madame de St. Hermine down hither, as soon as the state of his wound will enable him to bear the journey. Is not this most kind and hospitable? Mr. Archer thinks himself bound to embrace every possible opportunity of obliging Madame de St. Hermine, in return for the tenderness and care lavished by her for so many years upon

his niece. This mark of attention to her son will gratify her more, I doubt not, than any thing else he could devise.

Ferdinand, when he finds Madame de St. Hermine is to be so well attended on her journey back, will probably set out before her; and, I hope, come here, instead of returning immediately to Parkton Castle.—I long for his arrival. Lord Litchmere's persevering assiduities put me out of all patience. He is here for ever; and people begin to smile, and nod, and look exceedingly significant whenever they mention his name to us. I am amazed Geraldine does not perceive the conjectures that are forming. Sometimes, to say the truth, I think she *does* feel a little conscious. I have more than once, lately, observed her endeavouring to place herself out of his lordship's way: she is less ready to converse with him than formerly; and yesterday, on hearing Mr. Archer say, that, after hunting to-day, he should bring Lord Litchmere home to dinner, she cried out, with some quickness,

“ And won't you bring any body else, my

dear uncle? We shall all grow tired to death of seeing so much of Lord Litchmere!"

"I fancy," answered he, laughing, "you would much sooner grow tired of some other members of the hunt! However, if I can pick up an agreeable straggler or two, I will indulge you."

Mrs. Neville has not yet openly attacked Geraldine, but she very freely rallies me upon the subject of his lordship's attention to my friend. In her heart, I believe, she is not sorry to observe his increasing partiality: should he succeed, all danger would be over of Lesmore's entering the lists. I know not that she ever penetrated the secret of my brother's attachment: but she is too sensible, too candid, indeed, not to be aware, if Miss Fauconberg continues disengaged, of the extreme probability there is of Lesmore's becoming her admirer.

We have had a long, tiresome, morning visit from Miss Charlebury, with whom our intercourse has, of late, been very remiss. She had heard of our little play, and gave evident tokens of a disposition to be affronted at

not having been invited to its representation. Geraldine appeased her as well as she could; and was prevailed upon to promise, if any exhibition of the same kind took place here again, Miss Charlebury should be one of the first upon the list of those who were to be asked.

I know not why it is, that, even in wiser and more amiable people than Miss Charlebury, I always discover something ludicrous and mean, the moment they show themselves *affronted*. Heaven knows, there are times when we may all have reason to be so! But why should we betray it? There is a want of dignity, a paltry petulance in these easily-affronted folks, that more irresistibly excites my disdain and risibility, than any of the petty vices of society. The noble lion is tremendous in his anger; but still he preserves his majesty: the murmuring, buzzing, troublesome insect it is, which, at the same time that it molests us, we crush, despise, and think of no more!

Mr. and Mrs. Hanmer are still here, and

we hope will remain with us till the return of Madame de St. Hermine. Yet—there must be a drawback, you know to every human enjoyment—if they were gone, Lord Litchmere could not be permitted to visit us so often : Mr. Archer would immediately see the impropriety of it; and I should be relieved from the only lasting cause of inquietude I have ever experienced in this dear house.

My mother writes me word, that when you leave her, if Madame de St. Hermine is not come back, she means to pay a short visit to Caroline. I have assured her of the real anxiety I feel, notwithstanding my love for Geraldine, to be restored, at least for a time, to the comforts of home : but it is impossible I should yet fix the moment for my return. Every thing depends upon the state of Monsieur de St. Hermine's health. Besides, to speak the truth, I have a great curiosity to see the little bride ; and hope to be allowed to spend a few days here after she arrives. Adieu. I will keep this open till the end of the week, as I may then, perhaps, be able to

announce to you the return of Ferdinand.—
William and Mary are to be married next
Wednesday.



Nov. 17.

LESMORE made his appearance here again yesterday evening. His arrival was hailed with the most flattering demonstrations of pleasure by the whole party. Geraldine, who was playing at chess with Mr. Hammer, nearly overturned the board, in her eagerness to rise and approach him. To my great joy, Lord Litchmere did not happen to be here. The most unsuspecting observer, could not have witnessed my brother's first address to Geraldine, without discovering his attachment to her. Mr. Archer himself, I believe, now begins to be aware of the truth; and yet, for a sensible man, he is the least quick in making remarks of this sort, of any body I ever knew.

To our inquiries relative to Monsieur de St. Hermine, Ferdinand answered, that he was going on as well as possible: "His

wound," he added, "is so nearly healed, that he is scarcely withheld by any thing but weakness, from setting out on his journey hither immediately. He is already removed, and comfortably established at Mrs. Selforth's house; and his mother has taken an apartment in the neighbourhood."

Lesmore then presented to Mr. Archer a letter of thanks from Madame de St. Hermine for his kind invitation to her convalescent son, leaving to my brother the task of explaining why its acceptance was retarded.

In the course of the evening, both Geraldine and I asked many questions concerning the newly married lady. Ferdinand's brief description of her in his letter, had awakened our curiosity, and we hoped for some amusement from his report. But he is one who sees and observes more than he chooses to communicate, at least when expressly called upon. The remarks he often makes, apt and saucy as they are, fall from him without premeditation: ask him to describe a character bordering at all upon the ridiculous, and you make him mute; he feels,

I suppose, as people do who are desired to be witty : but let him quite alone, and such keen, arch, and comic observations escape him, as might demolish the gravity of a Stoic.

We gathered from him by degrees, however, some particulars of an interview he has had with Mr. Selforth, which almost made us amends for his silence relating to the sister. A day or two before he left town, Lesmore, without mentioning his design to any one, good-naturedly determined, in an amicable conference, to prevail, if possible, on the guardian-brother, to abate something of his resentment, and yield up the immediate possession of his sister's fortune. Ferdinand acknowledges it was but a hopeless undertaking; yet, the effort was worth making : since, if he succeeded, he should confer happiness on those in whose behalf he stepped forward ; if he failed, bring disappointment to none.

Mr. Selforth, little dreaming of the purport of his visit, received him with all the good manners of which he is capable ; but Lesmore confesses, that, though not unlike a gen-

tleman in his appearance, his deportment and style of conversation are coarse and blunt. With such a personage, Ferdinand thought it advisable to mount his stalking-horse, and assume an air of conscious superiority. Mr. Selforth, without being intimidated, felt his own consequential pride thrown off its balance by this stately behaviour, and, though he rejected my brother's petition, he attempted some qualifying excuses, and expressed much concern at being compelled to deny any thing to Mr. Lesmore's solicitation: but, indeed, the person for whom he had condescended to interfere, ill deserved the effort he was making for him—an adventurer, a beggar, a man without connexions or friends—

“ I must beg to say,” interrupted Lesmore, “ that you labour under a mistake, Sir.—*I* call myself his friend, and many of those by whose friendship I am most honoured, extend their regard to Monsieur de St. Hermine. Your last charge, therefore, is wholly unfounded. With regard to the two former, I have only to observe, that it is neither my practice, nor that of the persons with whom

I am accustomed to associate, to select friends from amongst adventurers!"

Mr. Selforth reddened at this haughty rebuke, but forbore any retort; and during the remainder of Ferdinand's visit, though no acquiescence could be obtained from him, he abstained from abuse of his brother-in-law, and chose to rest his refusal upon the laudable plea of resentment against his mother for the part she had acted in the affair. Lesmore did not consider himself as bound to enter the lists with him in defence of his parent: but leaving that point to be settled between him and his conscience, made his bow as soon as he discovered the utter improbability of prospering in the object of his visit.

An application of this disagreeable nature, voluntarily undertaken by a character so averse to officiousness as my brother, is a strong and convincing proof of real friendship. I am sorry for its failure, and sorry he loses the pleasure of announcing his success to Madame de St. Hermine. Both Geraldine and I think it hard, that, for the next

three or four years, poor Mrs. Selforth (silly though she may be) should, with her slender income, be burthened with the charge of lodging and maintaining the young married couple. An idea has occurred to Geraldine, which, some time hence, she means to communicate to her uncle, and which may prove highly to their advantage. The house we are now in, you know, belongs to Mr. Archer. Geraldine's paternal domain lies in Herefordshire; and a large mansion, wholly unoccupied, except by an old steward, and two or three inferior domestics, stands useless and deserted. Her plan is, to offer this residence, too extensive, perhaps, for their present circumstances, but otherwise unexceptionable, to the newly wedded pair, till the bride comes of age. It is completely furnished, has an excellent garden, and possesses every accommodation which could make their abode in it economical and pleasant. Is not this scheme worthy of our ever-considerate and generous Geraldine?

We asked Ferdinand whether he meant to be present at the marriage of his *protégés*, William and Mary?

“ I shall pay them a visit to-morrow,” answered he ; “ and if I find they really wish for my attendance, I shall have great pleasure in seeing two such interesting young people united.”

“ Were you ever at a wedding, Geraldine ?” inquired I.

“ No, never.”

“ Nor I. Would it be very wrong, Mr. Archer, if we were to accompany my brother to this ?”

My unexpected demand caused a little demur among the worthy elders, and was not immediately answered. At length, however, Mr. Archer mildly said,

“ There would be nothing *wrong* in it, my dear Julia, certainly ; nor in any thing else you would ever ask. But your distinguishing this young couple so particularly might occasion too much animadversion in the neighbourhood, especially as they are not my tenants, and as this would be the first time Geraldine had ever conferred such a mark of favour upon any one.”

I was sensible of the propriety of this objection, and would immediately have given

up a point upon which my heart was by no means anxiously set; but Geraldine, who found herself the innocent cause of the refusal I had encountered, and who can at all times better bear a deprivation herself than endure to see one inflicted upon another, entreated me to go without her. “None of the motives for staying away,” said she, “which my uncle has mentioned, need influence you. Go then, my dear Julia, and I shall at least have the pleasure of hearing an account of the wedding.”

“This young lady,” said I, taking her hand, and addressing the company, “is so obliging as not only to consider me herself in the light of a great spoilt baby, but, you perceive, is even desirous to show me off as such to her friends. I beg leave, however, to assure her, in presence of you all, that she has mistaken my character; that I *can* submit to a little contradiction; and that, without going to the wedding, I shall behave very prettily all day, and neither pout, mutter, nor scowl.”

Every body seemed charmed with this assurance, which was voted to be truly heroic.

I have now to inform you, that Ferdinand is

invited to remain here till the return of Mad. de St. Hermine, in order to escort me safely back to Parkton Castle. There we shall probably continue till the third week in December, when Mr. Archer has engaged us to return hither, in company with my mother, and spend a fortnight or three weeks. Caroline and her husband will be invited to meet us; and much regret is felt, and expressed, at the terrible distance which precludes us from all reasonable hope of being joined by you and Mr. Lumley. I am amazed that people in their senses can ever submit to being buried alive in such remote corners of a kingdom!



Nov. 19.

HERE am I, a poor, forsaken, and neglected damsel, reduced to find amusement for myself how I can. Ferdinand and Geraldine think of me no more than if I were not in existence. This whole morning have they been sitting together at one end of the library, reading *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, whilst Mrs. Hanmer and I have been working and chatting at the other. It has been a most

blustering, stormy, disagreeable day, and none of the party ventured out. We have given up spending so much of our time in the dressing-room since the Hammers have been here, because we did not choose to leave the good old lady alone: and Ferdinand, getting intelligence of this change of plan, remains down stairs till we disperse to dress for dinner. He has also robbed me of my old partner at battledore and shuttlecock; and this evening I was forced to supply her place at the chess-table with Mr. Hammer, to give her and Lesmore an opportunity of looking over a huge portfolio of etchings and drawings, which Mr. Archer brought from Italy twenty years ago, and which has remained peaceably unexamined in the library till dragged forth by this amiable pair, to serve as a pretence for their detaching themselves from the rest of the party. She afterwards sung to him; and, at the conclusion of the evening, they took possession of a sofa at some distance from us all, and, wholly engrossed by each other's conversation, verily forgot, I believe, that any one else was in the world.

What think you of this marvellous change?

Good policy and delicacy equally forbid my appearing to notice it ; but the secret satisfaction with which I view it, gives a spring to my spirits, and a glow to my heart ! Geraldine Fauconberg, I now feel assured, will become our sister ; and in her will Lesmore find every attaching quality, every merit, and every talent, that gives happiness to domestic life, or graces and adorns society ! Sweetly easy, cheerful and unconstrained is her whole behaviour to him ; whilst his towards her amounts to little less than adoration. Nobody interferes with them, no one takes the liberty to hazard any raillery ; but all here witness their increasing regard with silent, heart-felt satisfaction.

How will dear Madame de St. Hermine delight and exult in the accomplishment of her predictions ! I long for her return ; I long to behold in her still beautiful and ever-interesting countenance,—the expression of generous and affectionate joy, which, at such a sight, I know will beam upon it !

Nov. 20.

William and Mary were married this morning. They did not come here after the ceremony, as was expected, but, at the earnest request of some of the bridegroom's friends, staid and dined at his father's, with a large party of relations. We shall have them here the day after to-morrow.

Whilst Ferdinand was with them at church, Lord Litchmere, whom we have seen less of this week than usual, called; and before he left us, Mrs. Neville and Emma Cecil paid us a visit likewise. Mr. and Mrs. Hanmer happening not to be present, Mrs. Neville, soon after she was seated, said—

“ My dear Miss Fauconberg, when will those worthy, but provoking friends of yours, go away? When shall we have the happiness, once more, to get you amongst us? The Everleys, and myself, and half a hundred others, are repining most bitterly at the seclusion to which you condemn yourself. Do fix a day for coming, with Miss Lesmore, to dine with me.”

“ We cannot, indeed, at present,” replied Geraldine; “ but as soon as Madame de St. Hermine returns, we shall be delighted to accept the invitation.”

“ Well, then, I must have patience ; but let me prepare you for the sort of guest you will find with me. Sir Henry Tresilian, who makes a species of idol of this little creature,” looking at Emma, “ has been plaguing me with a volume of letters, to solicit permission to come and see her. I think the request natural enough for an idle man, and should be perfectly disposed to comply with it ; but as he does not talk of bringing Lady Tresilian with him, and I am not yet in my grand climacteric, I so far condescend to court the favour of a gossiping world, as to encumber myself and my house with the very queen of the gossiping sisterhood ; whose plausible primness, however, and antediluvian appearance, may give a sanction to my conduct, and enable me, without fear of censure or malignity, to receive whom I please.”

There was no one present who felt entitled to remonstrate with Mrs. Neville ; yet we

all, I believe, at the conclusion of this speech, experienced a sensation of mingled concern and disapprobation. If Sir Henry is so devotedly attached to his little niece, why take her from him? At all events, why admit his separate visits? Lady Tresilian, though with less ostentation, is just as fond of the child as Sir Henry. How will the best hearts in the world harden themselves sometimes against particular individuals, and be betrayed, merely from disliking the cast of a countenance, into committing real acts of injustice ! Mrs. Neville, I am persuaded, never reflects upon the part she is acting towards Lady Tresilian; but happening, unfortunately, to find her insipid and dull, allows herself, without further provocation, to make her comfortless, and perhaps unhappy.

We encouraged her as little as possible to dwell upon the subject ; neither Geraldine nor I ever feeling so little disposed to love her as when she is talking of the Tresilians, or of her usurpation of Emma Cecil.

In the course of her visit she discovered what, till then, she had not appeared to sus-

pect, that Ferdinand was actually a resident again at Highgrove Park. She asked how long he had been returned from town? And when we told her, forced a smile, and said—

“ Pray let him know from me, that he will find his eyes by no means in safety, the first time we meet, unless he devises some credible excuse for his ungracious neglect of me during the three whole days he has spent almost at my very gate !”

“ Consider,” said I, “ the abominable weather we had yesterday; and remember that to-day he is gone to a wedding !”

“ Never tell me of weather and weddings—the far-famed, and “unfortunate Miss Bailley,” was not used more “ ungentlely !”

Then, addressing Lord Litchmere, who had borne very little part in the conversation, but walked about the library, examining the title of the books, she said—

“ Come, my lord ; you, at least, shall go home with me, and do your best to afford me some relief from the nausea excited by poor dear Mrs. Southwaight’s acquiescent conversation !”

Lord Litchmere, who, on his first coming in, had been asked by Mr. Archer to meet my brother here at dinner, informed her of his engagement, and civilly declined her invitation.

She then rung for her carriage, and less out of humour with us all than I expected her to have been, considering the ill success of her several applications, soon after went away.

We now expected, and watched with considerable impatience for the return of Lesmore, in order to gather from him some account of the wedding. No Lesmore, however, made his appearance till after Lord Litchmere was gone home to dress.

We met him at the library door.

“Well, Ferdinand,” cried I, “is the important ceremony over? You have been a long time away.”

“True,” answered he; “and I must away again, as soon as I am dressed.”

“Where, then, are you going?”

“To Mrs. Neville’s; I met her on my return home, and she made such a point of my dining with her, that I could not refuse it without giving her absolute offence.”

“Humph!” ejaculated I; and, glancing my eyes towards Geraldine, I thought I beheld a slight shade of dissatisfaction, or, more properly speaking, of disappointment cross her brow. All she said, however, and that with great mildness, was—

“I am sorry you will not be here to meet Lord Litchmere, who has been invited on purpose.”

“And I am sorry too,” replied he; “but I shall get away as early as I can, and hope to spend the greatest part of the evening at home.”

He then went into the study to inform Mr. Archer of his engagement, and Geraldine and I retired to prepare for dinner.

We saw no more of him till near ten o’clock. When he came in, every body, except myself, was engaged round the card-table. Mrs. Hanmer, after tea, had proposed a game of whist, which was to have consisted of herself, her husband, Mr. Archer, and Lord Litchmere. The latter, who had appeared throughout the day extremely out of spirits, pleaded the head-ache, in excuse for declining to be a

party concerned in the arrangement. Each of the young ladies were then alternately called upon. I cannot play at all; and Geraldine scarcely knows the common rules of the game; yet, rather than disappoint Mrs. Hanmer, she cheerfully consented to act the part of a *live dummy*: and her services, in that capacity, being accepted, she took her station; and Lord Litchmere sat by her, offering to direct her hand.

I am too little acquainted with the habitual bent of this young nobleman's character, to be able to account for the very evident change I have, during his last three or four visits, remarked in his countenance and general appearance. Gay he never was, I believe; but at times I have seen him remarkably cheerful: he wore an air of contentment; he conversed readily and agreeably; and though he confined his attention, perhaps somewhat too exclusively, to Geraldine, yet he understood the art of rendering himself, more or less, acceptable to every body. All this is now at an end; he comes more rarely to the house, and whilst here has a look of

seriousness amounting to dejection : seldom makes any effort to address himself particularly to Geraldine, and has excited in us all a strong idea, that something painful hangs upon his mind, and injures at once his health and spirits.

It has occurred to me, that the precautions employed of late by Geraldine, to avoid his too great assiduities, have not escaped his observation, and have hurt and alarmed him. If such is the case, I pity him sincerely. What, when he finds he has a rival, will be his feelings, if, even whilst he believes her attached to no other, they are so acute, that on the first symptoms of reserve and coldness, he suffers thus severely?

Geraldine has not a suspicion of the cause which I believe to have produced his disquietude. She sees the effect, however, and appears much concerned for him. Now that he has ceased to distinguish her in so marked a manner, she seems anxious, by every little attention and civility in her power, to relieve his melancholy, and draw him into general conversation. She attributes the change in his looks entirely to his feeling indisposed ; and treats

him exactly as, were he sick, I should, in my best humours, treat Ferdinand.

On the return of this latter from Westhill, the card-players made a pause in their game, and he went up to the table. Lord Litchmere, who had not seen him before since he last came down, shook him by the hand in the most friendly manner, and Geraldine welcomed him with a smile, which I was glad, for his own sake, his lordship did not observe.

In a few minutes he was ordered to sit down quietly by me, and let them finish their rubber undisturbed. He came and placed himself near the little table at which I was working, and I asked him what sort of day he had passed, and whom he met at Westhill?

“Nobody but a simpering, obsequious old lady,” answered he, “who seems established there for the express purpose of lavishing the most fulsome flattery upon the mistress of the house.”

“And is it kindly received?”

“It is scarcely even listened to. Mrs. Neville abridges half her fine speeches with undisguised impatience; looks fretted, and

almost ashamed every time she opens her lips; and seems either to question the sincerity, or deride the meaning of all she says."

I then informed him of the motive to which Mrs. Neville had herself ascribed the invitation she had given to this parasitical Mrs. Southwaight. His countenance changed in a moment; he listened to me with the most earnest attention; and seemed disturbed as if by some unusually painful reflections. He scrupulously forebore, however, giving them utterance; and, after sitting silent a considerable time, insensibly led me to talk upon other subjects.

Meanwhile, poor Geraldine, though her face retained its wonted expression of sweetness and good-humour, could not wholly suppress a few involuntary yawns, occasioned by the immoderate length of the game. Even Mrs. Hanmer complained of it; and I am persuaded that nothing but being in the vicinity of Geraldine could have detained Lord Litchmere at the card table, though

merely as a looker-on, one quarter of the time.

“An hour may be tedious, but it cannot be long,” is the saying of one of our modern sages*. Geraldine, perhaps, consoled herself with this reflection, whilst her task was drawing to a close; and, in due time, received the reward of her patience, by experiencing its truth. She rose up, completely tired, and a considerable loser: but with as unclouded a brow as if she had been spending exactly such an evening as would have been most congenial to her taste and wishes.

In these trifling transactions, more than in points of greater importance, is the real temper distinguished. Perhaps I might, on serious occasions, give evidence of as high principles, and show sparks of as good a disposition as Geraldine; but in lesser instances, where *les petites morales* only are concerned, she makes me blush perpetually at

* Dr. Johnson.

my own inferiority. So many trivial occurrences fret and disturb me, which flash harmless across her serene mind; she bears the common little disappointments or vexations of life with a tranquillity so unruffled, that a superficial observer might be tempted to accuse her of want of feeling. The fact is, that, for herself, she *does* want feeling, in these minute particulars. She makes the content and accommodation of others so much her object, and partly from nature, partly from education and habit, is become so indifferent to her own exclusive gratification, that I sincerely believe there is nothing temporal she would not renounce to please another, except her friends, her fame, and her word.

My brother and Lord Litchmere, after the card party broke up, entered into a social conversation. They appear mutually well disposed towards each other, and, but for our mischievous little Geraldine, might become very cordial and unreserved friends. But I suspect she will speedily prove the means of

estranging them; for who can bear a rival
near the throne?

My dearest Augusta, farewell.

J. L.

LETTER X.

MISS LESMORE TO THE SAME.

Nov. 23.

WE have had a letter from Madame de St. Hermine, who teaches us to expect her arrival early in the approaching week. She writes only a few lines, but those are dictated by cheerfulness ; and we have now the pleasure of knowing her to be relieved from all apprehension relative to her son's recovery.

Yesterday was fixed upon for the reception here of the newly-married couple, William Weston, and his pretty Mary. The father of each, and the aunt of William, were invited to partake with them of the plentiful, and I might almost say elegant, repast provided on the occasion. Several young men and women, the sons and daughters of Mr. Archer's tenants, had likewise been asked to enliven the day ; and, early in the evening, the arrival of the village Orpheus, in the

shape of a lame and squinting fiddler, gave the signal for their all beginning to dance.

It happened in the morning, whilst Mr. Archer was out on horseback, he had met Mrs. Neville in her carriage, and stopped to hold a long parley with her. She reproached him for being so bad a neighbour; and, on his promising amendment as soon as his friends the Hammers were gone, she laughingly said,

“ Well, but why should these dear good souls, if they prevent your going *out* of your house, withhold you from asking other people *into* it?”

“ *Upon this hint I spake,*” continued Mr. Archer. “ I told her of the party that was to dine here, and assigned that as a reason for not inviting her to-day, since all my servants would be employed in waiting upon, or doing the honours to the bride and bridegroom: but I very cordially pressed her to come to-morrow, and offered to ask any body she pleased to meet her. The sound, *bride and bridegroom*, has, I believe, a magical effect upon all young women. No sooner had the

words escaped me, than she declared she would come this evening to take a peep at them; and, with this determination, wishing me good morning, she ordered her coachman to drive on."

Accordingly, after dinner, just as we were on the point of proceeding in a body to the servants' hall (the scene of present festivity), Mrs. Neville and Miss Cecil were announced. They were received with the most cheerful welcome, and, having acquainted them with as much of the young couple's history as sufficed to explain the reason of their being thus distinguished, we pursued our way to the unadorned, but happy ball-room.

As we approached it, Geraldine remarked with some surprise, that the music had wholly ceased; and desired us to stop, and listen to a strange, unaccountable, droning noise, occasionally interrupted, or, at least, overpowered by peals of laughter, and loud reiterated bursts of applause. Eager to know what this could mean, Mr. Archer suddenly stepped forward, and threw open the hall door. You would have been entertained had you witness-

ed the confusion this simple operation occasioned. The murmuring, muttering, indistinct sound which had baffled our united conjectures, proceeded from honest Cæsar, the negro, who, whilst the company sat down to take some rest and refreshment, had been prevailed upon to exhibit for their amusement, one of his native dances, to no other music than that of his own nasal uncouth singing. What it most resembles is the vile twanging of a Jew's harp; and yet it is altogether different from that, and from every thing else which European ears ever heard.

Our appearance extremely disconcerted him, and with blushes, perhaps, though such as the tincture of his skin rendered invisible to our eyes, he was modestly retiring to an obscure corner, when Ferdinand went up to him, and, with a look of encouragement, urged him to proceed.

"Come, Cæsar," cried he, "finish your dance; we shall all like to see it, and Miss Fauconberg will be particularly pleased if you go on."

Cæsar glanced his eyes towards Gerald.

ine, and observing her smile and nod, he gained courage.

“ Shall I, massa ?” inquired he, looking at Mr. Archer.

“ Yes, yes, Cæsar, by all means.”

Forth, then, stepped the emboldened performer, and without farther solicitation, renewed his fatiguing exertions. Expert and active, at the same time that he possesses an excellent ear, he kept time so exactly both with hands and feet, to his own dolorous melody; went through his task with such impenetrable gravity, yet made such grotesque grimaces, such ridiculous contortions, that, once more, the whole room resounded with laughter and plaudits. Our three gentlemen, in particular, entertained themselves inconceivably, by drawing comparisons between poor Cæsar, and a certain *Monsieur Poussatin*, mentioned, I think they said, in the *Mémoires de Grammont*. The parallel afforded them so much amusement, that I felt mortified at not understanding its merits. The dance ended, and crowned with the hard-earned praise it so well-merited, Cæsar,

panting and puffing, humbly stationed himself upon a bench behind the door, from under which, the next minute, slowly crept forth his faithful friend, Pompey, who, deliberately mounting up on the seat beside him, stretched his huge fore paws across his knees, and, burying his broad black nose between them, securely concluded his evening nap.

Though we had seen, and wished them joy before, we now all advanced towards the young couple who were the objects of the *fête*. They stood up on our approach, and to Mr. Archer's inquiry whether they were already weary of dancing? readily answered in the negative.

"Well, then," said he, looking at William, and taking the hand of Geraldine, "here is my niece, extremely well disposed to bear a part in the amusement. Go and stand up with her, William, and call the merriest tune you can."

William bowed, and respectfully walked by the side of his lovely partner to the upper end of the room; Ferdinand, leading out the pretty bride, immediately followed; Emma Cecil

and I paraded after them, and then came an indiscriminate mixture of young farmers, and their sisters or cousins; smirking ladies' maids, powdered valets, sturdy housemaids, weather-beaten gardeners, &c. &c.—altogether, there stood up nearly twenty couple; some fat, some lean, some short, some tall, some young, some old; a few tolerably well-looking, and others as ugly as Gil Blas' Dame Leonarda: in short, such an assemblage of shining, grinning, jovial faces, I never before saw collected in one spot.

The good old-fashioned tune of "Come haste to the Wedding," being called, our dance began. William, though perhaps wholly untaught, was far from being a clownish or perplexing partner: there is a surprising degree of native ease, grace, and propriety in every thing he does; and he proved as good a timist as Cæsar himself. Ferdinand found somewhat more difficulty in getting on equally well with Mary; she was confused and abashed at the presence of so many intruders; turned to the left when she ought to have wheeled round to the right; tripped

down the middle when she should have changed sides; and, on discovering her blunders, looked so ashamed, and blushed so cruelly, that I felt quite concerned for her. At length, however, by encouragement and occasional assistance, Lesmore enabled her to do better; and we were all proceeding very prosperously, when an occurrence, at once ludicrous and alarming, suddenly put an end to our festivity.

Some unlucky rural wag, posting himself on the outside of one of the windows (little suspecting, probably, that Mr. Archer or any of his friends were present), contrived, unheard and unobserved, to slide up the sash, gently to push back a part of the shutter, and then, adroitly, to introduce amongst us a number of lighted squibs and crackers!—The commotion and disturbance this witty manœuvre occasioned, may be better conceived than described. Screams, exclamations, and useless endeavours to get out of the reach of the pursuing mischief, were almost universal. The dog growled most ferociously; men and women skipt upon the

chairs and benches; and those who were fortunate enough to be near it, made as hasty a retreat as they could through the door. During this scene of confusion, Geraldine, though as watchful as the rest to avoid the capricious windings and turnings of the hissing squibs, was so far from betraying any fear, that she was almost incapacitated from running by laughter. Ferdinand hovered assiduously round her, urging her to lose no time in getting out of the room; but, before she could effect her purpose, the train of her muslin dress, which had been drawn up while she was dancing, suddenly falling about her feet, impeded her progress, and one of the squibs darting towards her, the thin texture caught fire, and was instantly in a blaze!

An universal cry of terror was now heard. Geraldine, though she turned as pale as death, had yet the presence of mind to stand perfectly still; and to this most fortunate instance of self-possession, she was probably indebted for preservation from a calamity too frightful to think of!—Before the flame had

time to spread, Lesmore succeeded in completely extinguishing it; and then, dreading to let her remain another moment in the hall, he almost bore her away in his arms; returning, as soon as she was in a place of safety, to offer his services to the other ladies. Mrs. Neville and Emma Cecil had sought protection upon a form; but poor Mrs. Hammer and myself were extremely glad to speed into calmer regions: our provoking disturbers, however, had by this time nearly exhausted their fury; and we then had leisure to attend to the vehement imprecations uttered by the whole household against the perpetrator of this tormenting trick. Mr. Archer himself, placable as is his general disposition, appeared very seriously incensed on the present occasion. The danger incurred by Geraldine had been of so horrible a nature, that he could by no means consider the affair in an indulgent point of view; and hearing, that as soon as the feat had been performed, William Weston sprung through the window in pursuit of the delinquent, he expressed a hearty wish that he might overtake and bring

him to light. This wish, however, was not gratified; the night was too dark to enable William to descry the fugitive; and others, who subsequently set out on the same search, returned equally unsuccessful.

Whether the guests in the hall resumed their gay pastime after we left it, I know not. Certain it is, that those in the drawing-room were all more disposed to seek repose and quiet, than to tempt fresh hazards. Mrs. Neville, particularly, seemed completely subdued; and, seeing her take a seat apart from the company, and fall insensibly into a train of silent meditation, I ventured to approach her.

“Have the bustling incidents of the evening wholly overpowered you; my dear Mrs. Neville?” said I.

“I was not even thinking of them,” answered she. Then stretching forth her hand, and drawing me towards a vacant chair next to her, she added, in a low voice,

“I was pondering upon a discovery I have just made.”

“What is it?”

She faintly smiled, and answered,

“Your brother is in love with Miss Fauconberg.”

I know not why I was so disingenuous—since, in fact, I felt rather pleased that she had divined the truth—but on hearing her thus unexpectedly avow her conjectures, I was tempted to affect surprise, and, with a laugh, not more natural than her own smile, said,

“And has this idea arisen from the circumstance of his forbearing to stand passively by, whilst she was burnt to death?”

“No, no,” cried she, with some impatience, “had he *then* been less solicitous and attentive, I should have deemed him a monster! But previous to her being in any greater peril than the rest of the party, he thought of, he saw, he assisted no one else. His first impulse was to fly to her side; and while watching over her, with an emotion too evident to be mistaken, even *your* safety he wholly forgot.”

We were in no place where I could freely confide to her the state of the case: but

ceasing to preserve an air of feigned incredulity, I only said,

“ If the fact is such as you surmise, Geraldine herself is yet a stranger to the sentiments she has inspired”—

“ But cannot, without intentional blindness, long remain so!—I never saw love—genuine, tender love—more visibly portrayed, than in the countenance and conduct of your brother.”

She would have added something more, but Geraldine, who had been up stairs to change her dress, just then re-appearing, and approaching us, she dropped the subject.

Shall I acknowledge, that notwithstanding my firm and fond affection for Geraldine, an emotion of pity steals across my mind for Mrs. Neville? Ferdinand, I am convinced, has been very dear to her: yet sorrow, more than either jealousy or envy, was distinguishable in her countenance whilst expressing her conviction of his attachment to another. Surely in this, there is something truly generous!

She went home early; declaring, at her

departure, she left Westhill with the feelings of a culprit, reproaching herself the whole way for the rudeness she was committing in leaving her guest behind her.

“ But I thought,” added she, “ you would not like her, and so I left her at the fire-side, to amuse herself with my lap-dog.”

In taking leave of Geraldine, I observed not in her aspect the slightest vestige of diminished kindness ; nor was there any sensible alteration in her behaviour to Ferdinand.—I love and admire this liberality of heart.

Adieu, my dearest Augusta.

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER XI.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. NEVILLE TO SIR HENRY
TRESILIAN, BART.

Westhill, Nov. 22.

Arrivez-donc! Why torment me so indefatigably for permission to come, and, as soon as my consent is obtained, relax in inclination to avail yourself of it? I wish for you now on several accounts. Your last letter, and, indeed, some which preceded it, merit the severest reprehension, and, as I am much too lazy to write all I have to say upon them, I am impatient to see you, that I may have an opportunity of giving utterance to the resentment I am hoarding up against you. Tresilian, I am not blind to the perversity of your principles, and the shallow sophistry of your doctrine. I know that in admitting you beneath my roof, I admit one who aims at mischief; who thinks himself subtle, and hopes to be dangerous. That I do not, after penetrating such views, hate and re-

nounce you, proceeds from the utter contempt with which I regard all such hackneyed artifices, such flimsy immorality. I have known you too long to be ignorant of the wrong turn your mind has taken: how your heart may stand affected, I pretend not to ascertain; but your head has undeniably got a grievous twist! Mine, however, remains calm and cool; I detest your pernicious arguments, and am armed against them. I disdain the idea of being shaken by your ill-directed eloquence; yet preserve for you, from long habit and early intimacy, sufficient regard to abstain from coming to any serious breach with you.

Are not you ashamed of pretending to be sentimental and romantic? *You*, of all men upon earth! You, a thorough votary of dissipation, a complete worldling, a creature of fashion, a decided egotist, a scoffer at every thing serious and sober!—*You* have the assurance to address to me such pathetic lamentations as the following:

“ I am dissatisfied with myself and every thing around me; with the world—its delu-

sive promises;—its substantial disappointments!—I might have been supremely happy in domestic life;—for, vain and idle as the past tenour of my conduct has been, I begin to feel—for my own curse—that I have a heart formed to prize, beyond all others, the pure and tranquil blessings of family affection. Sickened of the follies and extravagancies inseparably connected with the career of a prodigal, attached only to his own pleasures, eager only for his own gratification, I pine for peace, for love, for retirement—for a tender counsellor and assistant in the path of reformation. A woman who was sincerely solicitous to mould me to virtue, to sooth my passions, and gently to guide my future steps, might now do with me what she pleased. I sigh to moor my long-agitated bark in some calm and placid haven; to put myself under the mild sway of some directing spirit, who, with mingled softness, gaiety, and wisdom, would lead me, by imperceptible degrees, to whatever is most honourable amongst men—most acceptable in a better world!”

Tresilian, how could you write such hypocritical cant?—and, of all people, how could you write it to me? Did you imagine, for a single moment, it would impose upon my understanding, or soften my heart? Awake, if such was your hope, from the vain illusion, and know, that all which these unsuitable sentiments excited, was disbelief of their reality, and laughter at the intolerable toil they must have cost you in compounding and arranging. But, upon reflection, I suspect they are merely transcribed from some forgotten novel. In my girlish days, I think I recollect reading a passage very similar, in a half-bound volume, unlawfully detained by my aunt's waiting-maid, from the circulating library to which it belonged. As books, like every other earthly possession, are subject to a rapid transfer, why may not this very volume, its dog-eared leaves, marble-papered boards, and noble flights of repentance, have fallen into your hands? Own the truth, my good friend, and I promise to forgive you, in consideration of the pleasure with which I re-perused what, when a miss, I used to read

with such solemn admiration, and thought so interesting and sublime.

I come now to other passages in your recent letter, more seriously censurable than any of the mock heroics hitherto touched upon. I shudder at the manner in which you speak of your wife! If you wish to remain upon friendly terms with me; if you wish, in the slightest degree, to preserve my good opinion, never shock me again by such bitterness of language, such implacability of aversion! You have no right so barbarously to stigmatize her as “the bane of your happiness—the scourge of your existence!—the cool, insensible instrument of your heart’s profoundest misery!” These expressions, to say the least of them, are unreasonable and unjust. She is exactly what she was when you voluntarily married her. Her defects have neither multiplied, nor assumed a malignant dye; you ought to bear with them; you ought to look back to the time, when, though you professed not great attachment to her, you thought yourself fortunate in obtaining so splendid a prize; and, ridiculing the idea

of an union contracted for love, you exultingly acknowledged yourself satisfied with the advantages derived from the attainment of wealth. Do you not remember, that some weeks previous to the ceremony, I remonstrated with you, in conjunction with many other of your friends, upon the step you were about to take? You laughed at our officiousness; prided yourself on the worldly wisdom of your choice; talked of the alliance like an avaricious money-dealer, intent upon making a profitable bargain; greedily anticipated the benefits of the contract; and, after enjoying, for nearly five years, all the conveniences and luxuries attached to the possession of that affluence you were so eager to attain, denote a disposition the most perversely ungrateful, in spurning at the ladder by which you mounted to the summit of your wishes.

I have now nearly concluded my animadversions. When I begun, I meant not to have said a tenth part so much; but the subject once touched upon, was difficult to quit; and numerous are the additions I might yet

make to what is already here stated. The reflections that crowd upon my mind are endless.—Come and hear them. It is no presumption, I hope, to say, that I fear you as little' as I feel disposed to spare you. I ought, I believe, in strict propriety, to be very reserved and very angry with you. I *am* angry at your treatment of your wife: but your declarations to myself, though impertinent, and, in fact, highly reprehensible, excite in me such a propensity to ridicule, that I cannot consider them as fit subjects for grave and permanent displeasure. Come, then; yet not as to your *guide*, your *monitress*, your *consoler*, your *heart's chosen and adored friend*; come rather, as to your undisguised reprover; your most tormenting derider; your merciless and implacable insulter. If you ~~are~~ really unhappy, seek consolation from a new succession of amusements—from the study of philosophy, if you please—seek it, in short, from any source likely to bestow it—but never dream of obtaining it from me. Wholly against my own will, have you chosen me as your confi-

dant, and set me up in your distempered imagination as the object of your unlawful worship. I never mean to realize the phantom. But let me now choose a more agreeable theme.

Emma Cecil hourly wins upon my affection. As a companion—I might almost say as a friend—I find her far above her years. She possesses, in a remarkable degree, that rare and ever-to-be-valued mental endowment, judgement. She never utters, it is true, nor performs, any thing that denotes genius.—Oh, to how many is that rare and noble attribute falsely and profanely ascribed!—but on no occasion does she ever betray puerility or bluntness of apprehension. A more soundly-constituted mind never came under my observation. Her favourite pursuit is reading: from mere books of amusement, I have had the wisdom to debar her; but works of useful-information engage and rivet her attention for hours and days. To her musical talents I give all the cultivation in my own power, and have procured for her the best master I could hear of in the county.

Meanwhile, cheerful, obliging, always rational, she is the very picture of innocence, the very model of attaching simplicity. Lovely little creature! would I had been born with a spirit half as happily organized!

Miss Fauconberg, more beautiful, more brilliantly endowed, both by nature and fortune, but not less pure and artless than our precious Emma, has (unconsciously, I believe) made a conquest worthy of herself. Ferdinand Lesmore admires and adores her. I know not why I should hesitate to acknowledge that Lesmore, of all the men I have ever been acquainted with, has interested and pleased me the most. He is not, generally speaking, a popular character: but, when well understood, he is irresistibly agreeable. He has a thousand virtues, without any of their extremes; without any opposite vices to deduct from their value. He is spirited without impetuosity; accomplished without presumption; frank without ill-breeding; and penetrating without distrust.—To the ease and polish of a man of fashion, he connects a feeling and noble heart, and the

soundest rectitude of principles and conduct. If he has a serious fault, it is that for which I myself might, I fear, be censured with most justice. He looks with too much contempt upon weak, frivolous, and ordinary characters. This intolerance of disposition *he* will conquer; his understanding is too good, and his nature too generous, to allow it permanent root. Whether *I* shall ever have the wisdom to overcome it, is somewhat more problematical.

That it is but reasonable to speak cautiously upon this subject, I have hourly occasion to convince myself. No internal resolutions, no preconcerted efforts, no conscientious endeavours, have power to make me endure, with decent patience, the faults and follies of my present inmate—poor, dear, obsequious, and honey-tongued Mrs. Southwaight! You know why I invited her; but you know not the torment it is to me to have a being of her description under my roof. I perpetually repeat to myself, “She is my guest; she came at my own desire; I must bear with her, or I violate all the laws of hospitality!”—In de-

spite of these secret remonstrances, I feel and demonstrate disgust every time she opens her lips. The flattery with which she surfeits me is so incredibly fulsome, so direct, so shameless, that she almost drives me into a passion! Wonderful is it, that a woman possessed of a tolerable competency, not meanly born, nor wholly uneducated, should have adopted a vocation in all respects so contemptible! Would you believe, that she absolutely condescends to pay fruitless, but unwearied court, to *Furie*, my snarling little old French dog? The creature has flown at her two or three times; and even in its best humour turns from her with airs of disdain, which prove, that there is nothing to which you may not make yourself too cheap. She aims at ingratiating herself with every individual in the house. Poor Emma she persecutes from morning till night with fond epithets, and boundless exclamations of wonder at her prodigious cleverness and *genius*. The good girl, when first addressed in this extraordinary style, blushed, and hung her head in painful confusion : but growing used to it by

degrees, she now hears all these fine things with the profoundest indifference: and, perhaps, knowing that we all came into the world for some useful purpose, thinks that Mrs. Southwaight was created to point out to her fellow-mortals, the folly and meanness of lavishing indiscriminate adulation.

Adieu. Hasten by your presence to put me in charity with this poor woman's society. She is of no earthly use here, now, but to sour my temper.—Oh, the mellifluous compliments that will be showered upon your devoted head! Adieu.

FREDERICA NEVILLE.

LETTER XII.

SIR HENRY TRESILIAN, BART. TO THE HONOURABLE
MRS. NEVILLE.

Thornbury House,

Nov. 24.

THE unexpected, and at this moment undesired, arrival of a party of sporting guests, obliges me to defer, for some days, my intended visit to Westhill. Yet, though I flatter myself with the hope of so speedily seeing you, I cannot forbear saying a few words upon the contents of your letter.

How severely you deal with me! In some respects, how unjustly you accuse me! Can it be, that you really suspect me of dissimulation? Do you, indeed, so little know me? I can scarcely conceive it possible.—Say I am presumptuous in having dared to communicate to you my sentiments; reprove me, if you will, for the harshness with which I spoke of Lady T——; blame me for making

so mercenary a choice ; laugh at my repinings, and exult in my punishment : but class me not with the vilest of the human race ; attribute to me no deception ; nor even imagine that, in a single expression, I designedly had recourse to exaggeration.

I have time for no more. Let me only entreat you will hold the balance in suspense till we meet : I merit not so rigorous a judgment. Believe this ; and believe me, my too dear and ever-lovely friend, your faithful, sincere, and submissive

H. T.

LETTER XIII.

MISS LESMORE TO MRS. LUMLEY.

Highgrove Park,
Nov. 25.

MADAME de St. Hermine and her youthful fellow-travellers arrived here last night ; but before I give you any details respecting them, my dear Augusta, I must confide to you a little vexation which, at this moment, engrosses all my thoughts.

Ferdinand, for two or three years past, has betrayed symptoms of distrust and uneasiness whenever Lord Litchmere has either made his appearance here, or even been mentioned. Last Saturday, after hunting together, they dined, I believe, *tête-à-tête* at Rushley ; and from that epoch I date the commencement of Lesmore's inquietude. Whether Lord Litchmere openly avowed his passion to my brother, or whether he undesignedly made it apparent, I am ignorant ; but Ferdinand is now

indubitably aware of it, and appears full of alarm, doubt, and agitation.

But restless and perturbed as a mere surmise rendered him, for I can scarcely believe Lord Litchmere deliberately revealed to him the secret of his heart, imagine what his feelings must be after the incident I am about to relate.

Mr. Hanmer was reading, and his wife, Geraldine, and myself, were sitting at work, yesterday morning, after breakfast, when, looking towards the Park, we perceived a cottager's child, whom we knew, running full speed towards the house. It was the son of Geraldine's nurse; and the moment she saw him, suspecting that something was amiss, she hastened to the front door to question him.

I explained to Mrs. Hanmer, whilst she was gone, that nurse Wilmot, one of the most creditable and worthy inhabitants of the neighbouring village, had lived several years in Mr. Archer's family, and discharged the duties of her situation with such conscientious fidelity, such judicious care and tenderness, that she had uninterruptedly enjoyed ever since the

highest degree of favour both with Geraldine and her uncle.

Scarcely had I concluded this little detail, when the former returned. She looked much concerned; and told us with an air of unaffected alarm, that the poor woman had, the day before, been taken exceedingly ill, was confined to her bed, and had talked so much of Miss Fauconberg, and expressed such an earnest wish to see her, that her husband had dispatched their little boy to request she would go down for half an hour to their house.

Mrs. Hanmer entreated she would lose no time; and as soon as her horse could be brought to the door, she came down, equipped for her charitable expedition, and cantered away, followed by an ancient and trusty groom.

At no loss for conversation with my sensible and cheerful companions, the morning insensibly glided away; and Mr. Archer and my brother, who, as usual, had been out riding, returned before we were aware how far the day was advanced. The first inquiry was after Geraldine: we stated the motive of

her absence, and for a time they were perfectly satisfied: but shortly observing that the day was rapidly closing in, Mr. Archer began to look uneasy; and Ferdinand, incessantly upon the watch, found no relief but in walking from one window to the other, or in occasionally diversifying his amusement by standing at the hall-door, straining his eyes in endeavouring to descry an object he seemed almost fearful of never beholding again.

At the moment, however, he was consulting with Mr. Archer upon the propriety of being allowed to go in pursuit of our strayed friend, the sound of carriage wheels reached us, and we heard the park-gate closed. No company was expected, and Madame de St. Hermine had apprised us it would be late before she could arrive. Yet this rolling vehicle, whatever it was, continued to drive forward; and we soon discerned, through the dusk, a chaise and two out-riders briskly advancing. Suspecting, though we knew not why, that Geraldine was, in some way or other, connected with the appearance of this unexpected carriage, her uncle, Ferdinand,

and I, went out to await its approach upon the steps of the front door. In a few minutes it stopped, the side glass was let down, and we beheld the anxiously-desired face of our Geraldine. Ferdinand impatiently opened the door for her, and, as he assisted her in descending, she said—

“My dear uncle, have you been alarmed for me? Why are you standing here in the cold? Why has my kind Julia exposed herself to this damp air?”

“We are assembled,” said Mr. Archer, taking her hand, “to pass sentence upon your conduct. Where has my little truant been all this time? And how happens it, that, after setting out on horseback, she returns in a borrowed carriage?”

Mrs. Hanmer now called out from the library-door—“Come, come, good folks; no explanations there in the cold! Bring Miss Fauconberg in, and let her tell her story by the blaze of a cheerful fire.”

We obeyed the prudent summons; and, as soon as Geraldine approached the light, were struck by her paleness, and a look of

consternation she vainly attempted to disguise.

“Miss Fauconberg,” cried Lesmore, anxiously, “what has been the matter? You have met with some extraordinary alarm!”

“I have, indeed,” answered she; “but my alarm is nothing compared to the mischief I have innocently occasioned. I reached nurse Wilmot’s cottage without either difficulty or delay, and sat with her above an hour, rejoiced to observe the sight of me seemed to afford her comfort and satisfaction. On my return home, it was with some surprise I found my horse disposed to pull unusually hard. Hitherto he has always been so tractable and gentle, that now I neither knew how to manage him, nor how to account for his fretfulness and impatience. Once or twice, to own the truth, I was upon the point of dismounting and walking home; but the old groom—so confidently assured me it was nothing but play, and seemed to think it would be so cowardly and degrading to alight, that I began to feel ashamed of my panic, and made a stout effort to acquire more courage. Shortly after, how-

ever, the cry of distant fox-hounds redoubled all my courser's friskiness; and he suddenly began prancing and capering in a manner I was so wholly unaccustomed to, that I was in danger every moment of being thrown. Old Isaac himself began now to think the business was going too far, and rode up with the intention of assisting me to alight; but before he reached me, another horseman, whose approach I had been too much confused and frightened to observe, galloped forward to my rescue, and, leaping to the ground, caught hold of the bridle of the fiery animal I rode. The force and abruptness of this motion, joined to the plunging of my horse, gave me such a shock, that I should have been inevitably dashed headlong, had not the same timely assistant caught me as I fell, and saved me further danger and apprehension."

"And who was this active preserver?" we all inquired in a breath.

"Lord Litchmere," answered Geraldine; "he had been following the hounds, when, providentially for me, though unhappily for himself, he met me on his return home."

“ Why unhappily for himself ? ” inquired Lesmore.

“ Because my horse, by springing and rearing so violently when his lordship seized him, gave his arm a wrench, which, I fear, has either broken or dislocated it. We were within two hundred yards of Rushley when the accident happened ; yet the pain he suffered rendered him so faint and ill, he seemed scarcely able to reach the house. The concern I felt for him, added to the tremour occasioned by my recent terrors, left me but little more strength than he had. I declined all solicitation, however, to make use of his carriage to return home in ; since I could not have accepted such an offer without waiting under his roof till it was ready : an expedient,” added Geraldine, smiling, “ which I thought my uncle, as I had no female companion, might not entirely approve. We parted, therefore, at his lordship’s gate, mutually commiserating, and loading each other with good wishes ; after which, recovering my spirits, and gaining greater firmness, I walked by the side of Isaac’s horse, whilst he accommodated

his pace to mine, and led my disgraced palfrey by the bridle. I know not how far I had proceeded in this humble guise, for the road was intolerably dirty, and my progress was exceedingly slow; but during a pause in the lamentations honest Isaac was making over me, I heard the sound of an approaching carriage. It was not without shame I reflected upon the danger of being seen and known, whilst in so forlorn a plight, and I quickened my pace in defiance of miry ways, hoping, before I was overtaken, to reach a cottage at a little distance, where I meant to conceal myself whilst the carriage past. Every moment, however, it gained ground upon me: indeed, it advanced so rapidly, that I began to apprehend the horses had either taken fright, or that I was intentionally pursued. The first of these suspicions vanished, on finding that as soon as the driver of this vehicle came up with me, he suddenly stopped, and a servant on horseback respectfully approached me. He belonged to Lord Litchmere, who, in the midst of pain incurred through my means, had been so kindly considerate as to

give instant orders, on entering the house, to put horses to his chaise, and follow me with all expedition. Touched, and grateful for such a mark of attention, at a moment when many would have thought only of seeking personal relief, I hesitated not to avail myself of the welcome aid, and entered the carriage, which has at length safely conducted me home."

At the conclusion of this little narration, Geraldine was most affectionately embraced by her uncle, and warmly congratulated by the whole party upon her fortunate escape. Much praise was bestowed on Lord Litchmere for the uniform kindness of his conduct ; and a messenger was instantly dispatched to Rushley, to make inquiries after him, and convey to him the thanks of Mr. Archer.

We were still at dinnér, when the servant, who had been sent on this errand, returned, bringing back intelligence, that his lordship had undergone a very painful operation, the surgeon who was called in having discovered that the arm was not only fractured, but considerably strained.

“ My lord is ordered to keep his bed,” added the man ; “ and they say he has a great deal of fever.”

So unfavourable a report struck us all dumb with concern and surprise. Geraldine’s knife and fork dropped from her hands, and pale and dismayed, she seemed to gasp for breath. After a general silence, which she was the first to break, she said to her uncle, in a voice of the softest compassion,—

“ Will you not go and see him, dear sir ? Surely he is entitled, from all who interest themselves in my safety, to every attention, and every acknowledgement possible !”

“ We will both go, Mr. Archer !” cried Lesmore, anxious, probably, to enlist himself in the number of those who “ interested themselves in her safety.”

“ With all my heart,” said Mr. Archer ; “ and if the sight of us both is too much for him, we will rest content with his admitting only one.”

The rest of our meal was grave and silent. Geraldine neither could, nor even sought to suppress her inquietude ; she eat nothing,

and scarcely raised her eyes; whilst all present, and none more than Ferdinand, regarded her with looks of perplexity and wonder. Yet I, who flatter myself that I can penetrate the secrets of her ingenuous heart better than any one, except Madame de St. Hermine, felt intimately persuaded this dejection proceeded not from any sentiment of love. Her nature is so tender, so susceptible of pity, and so open to impressions of gratitude, that sufferings much less severe, and a service infinitely less important, would almost have sufficed, in my opinion, to account for the sensibility she manifested. Ferdinand viewed not the matter in the same light; he seemed thunderstruck by all he observed, and so completely dispirited and shocked, that had Geraldine surveyed him, she could not but have been amazed at the disturbance visible in his countenance.

We sat a very short time after the cloth was removed; and Geraldine asked her uncle, as she left the room, whether she should order the carriage to be got ready for his visit to Rushley?

“ Yes, my love ; and I hope we shall bring you back better tidings.”

“ I earnestly hope so too,” answered she.

On reaching the drawing-room, her first care was to ring and bespeak the carriage ; after which, observing that Mrs. Hanmer was composing herself for a nap, she stole quietly up stairs. I suffered her to be absent a considerable time without venturing to follow her ; but, at length, somewhat anxious, I joined her in the dressing-room. She was sitting almost in the dark, at least with no other light than that which a nearly-extinguished fire afforded, and seemed lost in meditation of no very cheerful kind. I gently approached her, and taking her hand,—

“ My dearest Geraldine,” said I, “ how deeply you suffer the unfortunate occurrences of the day to dwell upon your mind !”

“ Ah, Julia,” cried she, “ I have more reason than you are aware of to feel confounded and distressed !”

I entreated her to explain herself, and by dint of interrogation drew from her the following particulars :—

The moment Lord Litchmere received her, as she was falling from her horse, the furious animal, conscious of no further restraint, galloped away, and obliged the old groom to set out in pursuit of him. Geraldine then remained *tête-à-tête* with her preserver. She owns his previous attention to her had not escaped her observation; and, on finding herself suddenly compelled to confess such obligations to him, she was seized with the most awkward sensations of embarrassment. Yet seeing him sinking, pallid, and apparently in great anguish, she could not deny him the feeble recompense of knowing how much she pitied him, and how deeply she was impressed with a sense of gratitude for his assistance. Whether she spoke with more softness than she intended, or whether Lord Litchmere thought the moment auspicious to his cause, I know not; but certain it is, he seized it with avidity to make the most passionate declaration of his attachment. He complained of her late reserve towards him, described the misery and sorrow this change inflicted upon him, and then proceeded thus:—

“ I never till you became known to me, Miss Fauconberg, felt a real, a deep-rooted passion for any woman living. You meant not, I am assured, to feed the flame; but at the commencement of our acquaintance, the sweetness of your manners, the vivacity of your conversation, and the indulgent politeness with which you deigned to treat me, emboldened me to aspire to your good opinion; gave me courage even to entertain a distant hope that I might one day call you mine. Your succeeding conduct taught me the fallacy of this hope;—yet could I not resolve to attempt dislodging you from my heart. If I cannot succeed in awakening your sensibility; if you condemn me to silence, and are averse to my pretensions, I submit,—and never shall a murmur issue from these lips; but as long as I shall have life, you will be dearer to me than all else that the world could bestow! Health, happiness, family, friends, I may resign, and cease even to regret; but my devoted affection to you will be the last tie by which I shall be held to earth!”

He trembled as he spoke, and the agitation

he was in, compelled him to lean against a tree for support. Geraldine scarcely dared to look up; the earnestness, almost amounting to solemnity, with which he had addressed her; the reluctance she felt at such a moment to pain him by any word of unkindness, and the dread she was in of being misconstrued if she was silent, perplexed and shocked her. She stood for some minutes motionless and thoughtful; but at length summoning all her courage,—

“My lord,” said she, “think only at this moment of the accident by which you have been a sufferer. I grieve to see that you are hurt; let us go from hence, that you may as soon as possible obtain relief from surgical assistance.”

She then, observing how weak and disordered he appeared, approached him, and notwithstanding what had passed, offered him the frail support of her arm.

“You repulse hope,” cried he, gratefully accepting it, “with more softness than others would encourage it. How do I feel touched by this condescension!—yet think not, sweetest

Geraldine, that I mistake its source. I read too well in that expressive countenance the sentiments of your heart. As a lover I see that I am wholly indifferent to you, though as a friend, perhaps, you may still admit me to your sight. Miss Fauconberg," added he, impressively, "I ask no more : allow me the felicity of occasionally conversing with you, and apprehend from me neither importunities nor complaints. My heart is relieved of an insupportable weight by having at length made this disclosure ; but never again shall its emotions be obtruded upon your attention. Think of me sometimes with friendship and concern ; and, in justice to the effort it will cost me, show yourself not wholly insensible to the merit of my future silence."

"What," proceeded Geraldine, "could I answer to this humble, I might almost say affecting address? Would it not have betrayed arrogance, and a disposition the most insultingly unfeeling, to have assumed any airs of disdain and resentment? I could not for a moment entertain such a wish ; but after a short silence, observing we were close to

Rushley, and seeing Isaac approaching with my runaway steed, I gently disengaged my arm, repeated my acknowledgements, and bade his lordship good morning. He would have detained me till the carriage could have been got ready to convey me home; but that, as I have already told you, I declined, and we immediately parted."

Here ended Geraldine's confession; during nearly the whole of which I endured the most painful agitation. My dear Augusta, her feeling heart, untouched by Lesmore's too long concealed affection, is moved by the respectfully avowed, the earnest passion of Lord Litchmere. Gratitude for the preservation she thinks she owes him, and sensibility for his sufferings, equally conspire to soften her in his behalf; and, unless some speedy effort is made by Ferdinand to check the progress of this growing preference, Geraldine will be lost to him perhaps for ever.

Engrossed by reflections such as these, I remained perfectly silent after she had ceased speaking, scarcely conscious where I was, and thoughtless of the strange effect my taci-

turnity must have in her eyes. At length I was recalled from this ill-timed fit of meditation, by hearing her say, in a tone of some surprise,—

“My dear Julia, have you no counsel to give me? No observation to make upon the communication I have intrusted to you?”

“A better counsellor than I am will be here to-night,” said I; “commit yourself to the wise and judicious guidance of Madame de St. Hermine: and if I forbear uttering any remarks upon what I have heard, attribute it solely to the fear of being guilty of some indiscretion. The sentiments your little narrative have awakened are such as, perhaps, I ought not to divulge.”

The gravity and apparent coldness of this speech seemed to mortify and astonish her.

“Julia!” cried she, taking my hand, “why this excess of caution? Surely the sincerity with which I have dealt with you called for greater cordiality and openness! I cannot bear that you should hesitate in declaring to me your opinion of any circumstance in which I am concerned.”

“ Well, then,” said I, discarding all reserve, “ I own myself ill-pleased by what has passed. I think most highly of Lord Litchmere’s character ; his rank in life, his fortune, and all exterior advantages, are precisely such as render his alliance not only unexceptionable, but, if you marry for ambition, peculiarly desirable : yet, pardon me, Geraldine, he is not the man I wish to see you united with. You cannot greatly love, though you may pity and esteem him ; and the time surely will not fail to arrive, when, to a discriminating, cheerful, and affectionate spirit like yours, something more may appear requisite for conferring domestic felicity, than the cold, phlegmatic virtues, of a half-animated philosopher !”

These words had scarcely escaped me ere I beheld a smile so arch, a significance so intelligible, flash across the features of my saucy auditor, that I could have bit my lips with vexation at what I uttered. Would you believe it ? The impertinent girl mentally applied every word of my description to our misjudged and injured Ferdinand ! She had not the assurance in plain terms to avow it ; but

I read the truth in every line of her provoking face. The epithet *philosopher* was what peculiarly discomfited her gravity : *cold* and *phlegmatic* Lesmore cannot appear to her ; but she has so often heard me, in raillery, dub him with the first-mentioned inauspicious title, that it could now scarcely fail recurring to her thoughts. I was too much dissatisfied with my own flippancy to wish the conversation prolonged, and when she proposed re-joining Mrs. Hanmer, willingly acquiesced.

The absence of Mr. Archer and Ferdinand, and the recollection of its cause, rendered this one of the dulllest evenings I have ever spent here. Geraldine, however, as the moment approached when she thought the arrival of Madame de St. Hermine might be reasonably expected, felt all anxiety respecting Lord Litchmere superseded by impatience to behold her maternal friend. Every gust of wind, as it blew through the trees, or swept past the house, sounded to her pre-occupied fancy like the distant noise of coach-wheels ; and as her hopes rose or fell, the colour in her cheeks varied from a paler to a deeper

red, her eyes sparkled with animation, or were dimmed with disappointment.

At length a low, hollow rumble, which gradually increased, and before long was unquestionably distinguished to be that of a carriage, reached our ears, and awakened in us all some portion of the same agitation experienced by Geraldine. It might, however, be only her uncle and Ferdinand; she was perfectly aware of this, and the doubtful expression, between expectation and fear, which suspense gave to her countenance, would, to a painter or a physiognomist, have made it a most invaluable study. In a few minutes the door-bell was loudly rung; and Geraldine, no longer able to command her impatience, flew into the hall, the instant she heard the servants approaching to give the new comers admission.—Poor girl! her eagerness, and her affectionate solicitude, were but ill rewarded! The persons who alighted were Mr. Archer and my brother, who both, misconstruing her appearance in the hall, attributed the circumstance wholly to anxiety respecting Lord Litchmere.

Nothing could exceed the gravity of Ferdinand's countenance as he silently followed the uncle and niece into the drawing-room. Mr. Archer, though involved in the same error, gave *his* sentiments utterance; and addressing Geraldine, in a tone between jest and earnest,—

“Have you no inquiries to make, my dear?” said he. “Can we give you no intelligence worth soliciting? Why so slow in requiring information, though so prompt in meeting your ambassadors?”

“My dear uncle,” answered Geraldine, colouring, yet forcing a smile, “I shall be very glad to hear the news you bring from Rushley; but I was not waiting in the hall for that purpose: I had flattered myself it might be Madame de St. Hermine's carriage I heard.”

Mr. Archer, long accustomed to rely implicitly upon Geraldine's scrupulous and strict veracity, gave instant credit to this assertion, and kindly told her he was sorry she had been disappointed. Lesmore, less intimately acquainted with all the merits of her character,

and stung by the recollection of her agitation during dinner, looked incredulous, and almost indignant at what he interpreted into an awkward equivocation; I saw the ungenerous distrust impressed upon his countenance, and but that he was a lover rendered irritable by a jealousy not wholly irrational, should have hated him for his injustice.

Geraldine, I believe, did not observe the change in his expression; for, endeavouring to cease listening for a carriage she now began to think it was hopeless to expect that night, all her attention was directed towards her uncle, who, at Mrs. Hanmer's request, was giving an account of the state in which he and my brother had found Lord Litchmere.

From this detail we learnt with great satisfaction, that the alarming report of the servant was considerably exaggerated. His lordship, it is true, suffered extremely during the operation of setting his arm; but the surgeon declared there was less fever than might have been expected, and made no difficulty in allowing the two gentlemen to pay him a short visit. They sat with him about ten minutes; he was low, but perfectly tranquil and com-

posed ; and, at their departure, requested to see them soon again.

“ But,” said Geraldine, when this relation was ended, “ you have been gone above two hours ; you must have paid some other visit.”

“ On coming down from the invalid’s apartment,” resumed Mr. Archer, “ we heard that a servant of Mrs. Neville’s was at the door to make inquiries after him. This accidental information put it into our heads to drive on to Westhill ; and finding the lady of the house disengaged, and not averse to our company, we staid with her till the apprehension of heightening your alarm for Lord Litchmere, by too long an absence, determined us to take our leave.”

Geraldine again coloured at the conclusion of this speech, and I doubt not, began to reflect with regret upon the unguarded and singular degree of interest she had betrayed at dinner respecting his lordship’s situation. Mr. Archer had no pointed meaning in what he said, but spoke with a straight-forward simplicity, neither designed to confuse nor tease her. Ferdinand gave more force to the words by a

single glance, than our Geraldine's kind uncle would have known how to bestow upon them in a twelvemonth. Her eyes at that instant happened to meet his; and, as if dazzled by a sunbeam, she turned away, and walked silently towards the fire!

A thousand times I have asked myself, why this momentary gaze should so evidently have had the power of disconcerting her: I deny not the penetrating expression of my brother's looks; but they never produced upon her till now an effect so striking, and so difficult to be understood. For myself, I can truly declare, that there is not a man this day in existence whose glances, whether of approbation or distrust, would make upon me the slightest impression.

It was now near eleven o'clock, and we had all agreed it would be folly any longer to entertain a hope of seeing Madame de St. Hermine before the following morning. Just as the sentence passed, however, Geraldine sprung from her seat, crying out,—

“ I hear them! I hear them!”

We anxiously listened, and in a very short

time had the pleasure of assuring ourselves she was not mistaken. Mr. Archer hastily pulled the bell, Mrs. Hanmer stirred the fire; I pushed forward the sofa; Ferdinand recovered his good-humour; and Geraldine, sparkling with joy, stood at the ready-opened drawing-room door, determined to give the first welcome to her incomparable friend.

In a few minutes, they were in each other's arms, regardless of all around them, and insensible to every thing but the pleasure of being re-united. Fortunately for Albert and his pretty wife, Ferdinand, to whom they were both so well known, took upon himself the task of introducing them to Mr. Archer and his guests, and spared them the unpleasant necessity, either of performing that ceremony for themselves, or of remaining awkward spectators of the delighted meeting of the two ladies.

Some degree of composure being re-established amongst us, Madame de St. Hermine, with all her accustomed grace and good-breeding, but without parting from the hand of her pupil, addressed herself severally to

the rest of her surrounding friends, and found something affectionate or obliging to say to each: but to none was her first salutation more flattering and distinguished than to my brother. Presenting to him the hand that was disengaged,

“ I rejoice most truly to see you here,” cried she; “ I should have looked around with an unsatisfied heart, and thought something wanting to complete my happiness, had you been absent from this group of friends.”

Ferdinand gratefully kissed her hand; and the next moment, Madame de St. Hermine led Geraldine towards her son and daughter-in-law, and presented them to each other as persons destined, she hoped, to become sincere and lasting friends. The reception Geraldine gave to them was charming; she had now resumed that collected and mildly-dignified deportment for which we have so often admired her, and which never forsakes her, unless some strong emotion assails her heart. Albert and his wife appeared enchanted by the sweetness and cordiality with which she addressed them: and even Ferdinand, ill dis-

posed as he so lately seemed to feel pleased at any thing she said or did, regarded her as if he had forgotten that such a person as Lord Litchmere was in existence.

On the appearance of the supper-tray, the travellers assembled round it, prepared to do no little credit to its contents. I had leisure then to survey the newly-married pair, and with pleasure to remark, the striking likeness between Monsieur de St. Hermine and his mother. Perhaps his countenance does not announce the strong sense that is marked in hers ; but it is equally open, animated, and prepossessing : and, moreover, extremely handsome. Scarcely any traces of his recent indisposition remain : indeed, had I not known how much he has suffered, I should have been far from suspecting how recently he was risen from a bed of pain.

La petite Claire, as he calls his wife, is, without exception, the fairest and the most lovely young simpleton I ever beheld. Without any polish, or acquired elegance, she is all grace and symmetry. Every turn of her head, every movement of her arms, displays,

some new beauty. Her clear blue eyes, as far as shape, brightness, and colour are concerned, have not a defect; her glossy and luxuriant hair, the glow of health upon her blooming cheeks, and the transparent delicacy of her skin, exceed any thing you can picture to your imagination! But—think me not envious or cruel—I looked in vain for the “heavenly spark” that should illuminate such exquisite features; I saw “no speculation in those eyes;” no intelligence in those dimpling and frequent smiles; all was vague, unmeaning, soulless!

But enough, for the present, of this fairy beauty. I shall probably have occasion to speak of her again; and on so short an acquaintance, it is scarcely allowable to pass a decided sentence upon her.

I have, this morning, enjoyed the satisfaction of a long and unreserved conversation with Madame de St. Hermine. Mr. Archer’s old friends, the Hanners, depart to-morrow; and Geraldine, who has behaved so sweetly to them during their long visit, would not, by forsaking them the last day they were

to spend here, destroy all the merit of her previous attention. She, therefore, as usual, since they came, sat down stairs the whole morning; but, on pretence of looking at some new books Madame de St. Hermine has brought from town, I contrived to steal into her apartment, where I remained unmolested, till the dressing-bell drove me to my own.

Ferdinand's most partial friend, Geraldine's friend, the firm friend of both our families, Madame de St. Hermine, in short, was as anxious to learn the particulars of what has passed during her absence, as I was to relate them. We commented upon, and mutually gave vent to our conjectures upon the subject of Lord Litchmere's avowed attachment. The effect his accident produced upon the spirits of Geraldine, Madame de St. Hermine wholly attributes to sentiments of humanity and compassion.

"We have seen her," added she, "weep over a suffering negro, an entire stranger to her, with emotions of more tender pity, than some hearts are capable of feeling for the

woes of a bosom friend. Her sorrow, therefore, on the present occasion, should not be construed into a proof of love: but I grieve that the too-susceptible Lesmore considers it as such, and again surveys her with looks of reserve and solemnity. It is but so short a time since he beheld her, though from different motives, with something of the same repulsive expression! She will learn to think him of a harsh and impracticable disposition, causelessly apt to imbibe discontent, and even, if coaxed into good-humour, difficult to be retained in it."

"My dear Madam," said I, smiling, "his good-humour has never been excited by her *coaxing*: we both saw but too plainly, that from the moment she suspected he slighted or disliked her, she disdained to concern herself at all about him; leaving wholly to his own choice the alternative of maintaining his reserve, or of seeking to discard it."

Madame de St. Hermine laughed, and said, "Very true, my dear Julia; and let Mr. Lesmore take care the same thing does not happen again! For a man of sense, one who

knows the world, and ought to know something of the female heart, it must be allowed, the methods he has taken of recommending himself to a lady's favour have been rather singular! That lady too, of a disposition easily won by kindness, but proudly impenetrable to unauthorized severity."

"Will you, my dear Madame de St. Hermine, undertake to discuss this subject with him? He requires only to be put upon his guard against betraying any relapse into ungraciousness; to the virtues and attractions of our Geraldine he is as fervent a convert as her most partial admirers could wish."

"Well," answered she, "I will try what can be done with him; and if my own eloquence fails, I must put into his hands the playful lesson given by our charming old poet, *Moncrif*, to all petulant and jealous lovers. Do you know the song he wrote upon *la belle Aspasia*? It ends with this remarkable line:

*Qui plaît est roi : qui ne plaît pas n'est rien * !*

* He who pleases is king—he who displeases is nothing.

May it not be for your brother's advantage to bear in mind so sensible a maxim?"

"I think it may; and perhaps the sooner it is recommended to his consideration the better."



Nov. 27.

THOUGH Mr. and Mrs. Hanmer have left us, the addition to our family-party of Monsieur de St. Hermine and his wife, and the restoration to us of their admirable mother, wonderfully enlivens our fire-side. Geraldine and I have resumed our old habit of sitting before dinner in the dressing-room. Madame de St. Hermine spends much of her time with us, and we have invited her daughter-in-law to join us whenever she is inclined. Ferdinand is not expressly excluded from our society, neither is he, I fancy, thought to have behaved well enough of late, to be positively numbered amongst the favoured few. Albert, when tired of field-sports, or male company, insinuates himself into our retreat, and would be no bad addition to the circle, if his

simple little help-mate could prevail upon herself to let him be at peace. But, perpetually craving attention, she suffers him to join in no conversation, nor to look at, or think of, any thing but herself; and thus, before he has been ten minutes in the room, all his pleasantry degenerates into childish and tiresome romping. We are annoyed to death by it; for the noise they make effectually precludes all application to the pursuits we may chance to be engaged in; and we have no resource against the insupportable punishment of passively contemplating their monkey tricks, but that of taking up some uninteresting piece of needle-work, or turning to our drawing-table. This last, is an amusement from which no molestation can ever disturb me; and as soon as the soft nymph and her swain meet in our apartment, I fly to it for refuge. Geraldine finds not the same relief at her painting desk; they often, whilst coursing after each other, shake the room so intolerably, that every thing rattles around her, and she can scarcely guide her tiny brush. Her temper, however, is proof

against their folly; and when all other mode of employment is bereft her, she puts aside her ivory, pallets, and pencils, and sits down with the most perfect good-humour to play country dances. She laughs at what she calls my cynical airs upon these occasions; and, however foreign to her own manners this turbulent and troublesome gaiety may be, finds for it, in the indulgent sweetness of her disposition, a constant palliation and excuse.

I own there is nothing in the sprightliness of Clara (I cannot accustom myself to give her the name of Madame de St. Hermine) which in any degree amuses or exhilarates me. Far from thinking the frolics of *real* children irksome, they raise my spirits, and I love even to join in their sports: but Clara's coquettish affectation; the frivolous objects that incite her to laughter; the drawling repetition of "Now don't!"—"Now you shan't!" fatigue and sicken me beyond expression. Besides, I really am provoked to see a fine young man made a nuisance and a fool of by so weak a girl. When she is present, he

scarcely ever utters a syllable of common sense; and not only in the dressing-room, before dinner, are we condemned to the entertainment of witnessing their silly antics, but during the whole evening the same wearisome manœuvres are going forward.

Yesterday Mrs. Neville, Mrs. Southwaight, and Emma Cecil, dined here. The Everleys and Colonel Courtville were invited, but the latter only came, looking more ineffable than ever. I do think that he and Clara would have made not only a very pretty, but a very suitable couple. I wish they had chanced to fall to each other's lot, and had left Albert to find for himself a more companionable partner.

Mrs. Southwaight, the smooth and obsequious Mrs. Southwaight, answered completely to the idea I had formed of her. Wherever I might have met her, I should have said to myself, "This must be the simpering old lady Ferdinand dined with at Westhill." She is not satisfied with occasionally insinuating into conversation a flattering remark, an accidental and passing compli-

ment; she gravely and deliberately spouts forth, in long and studied periods, such extraordinary and fulsome adulation, that I literally feel ashamed for her, and scarcely, whilst she is thus degrading herself, have the courage to look at her. Happily for us, Mrs. Neville made no scruple of cutting short the thread of her eloquence, as often as it interfered either with her own discourse, or that of any one to whom she wished to attend. Once, in the very midst of some flowery harangue, she suddenly cried out,—

“Hush, hush, for heaven’s sake, my dear Mrs. Southwaight! or you shall have no dinner, for I will order the carriage to the door, and send you back to say soft things to *Furie!*”—

Mrs. Southwaight, by no means shocked at this cavalier threat, turned to me, and, with the most placid smile, said, —

“What charming spirits the dear creature has! I never think her half so agreeable as when in these little sportive, whimsical humours!”

Clara, who was sitting on my left hand,

now whispered to me, with an air of simple surprise, inexpressibly entertaining,—

“How cross Mrs. Neville is to that poor old lady!—I am sure she is very civil and good-natured!”

“Will you change places with me,” said I, “and talk to her a little?”

Wholly unsuspecting of the selfishness of my motive, Clara readily complied with the proposal, and, in succeeding to her chair, I obtained the double advantage of getting further from Mrs. Southwaight, and nearer to Madame de St. Hermine.

Mrs. Neville, in the evening, while sauntering up and down the drawing-room, arm in arm with Geraldine and myself, inquired into the particulars of Lord Litchmere's accident. We briefly satisfied her curiosity; after which, lowering her voice, she said,—

“I will own to you, my dear girls, that I have of late felt great concern and anxiety respecting the health, both mental and bodily, of this poor cousin of mine. He has been so strangely depressed; his looks are so haggard, and his manners so altered, that I have

trembled, lest, preyed upon by some unsuspected sorrow, he should present to us a second instance, in the same unfortunate family, of the dreadful effects which disappointment may produce."

We started at this extraordinary hint, and entreated she would explain herself. After recommending to us discretion upon so delicate a subject, she proceeded to inform us (and never were auditors more solemnly attentive) that she had been assured there still existed, though living in profound seclusion, a poor unfortunate man, nearly connected with the family of Lord Litchmere, and himself the son of a nobleman, who, at the age of about two or three and twenty, had been contracted to a young lady he had known from a child, and to whom he was most devotedly attached. The parents, on both sides, had sanctioned and approved their desire of being united; and every thing was arranged for the speedy completion of the marriage. The father of the young lady, however, at all times a profuse and inconsiderate man, involved himself at this critical pe-

riod in such difficulties at the gaming-table, that he found himself under an absolute impossibility of fulfilling the engagements he had entered into with regard to his daughter's portion. To meditate at leisure upon some plausible pretext for dissolving the projected alliance, he feigned indisposition, and repaired for a few weeks to Bath, requiring his daughter to attend him. There the poor girl became known to a young man just arrived from abroad, and lately come into possession of a splendid fortune, who, wholly ignorant of her previous engagement, and struck by her uncommon beauty, sought and obtained the means of being introduced to her father. The consequence may be easily conjectured. The wealthy lover, intoxicated by passion, offered *carte blanche* to the needy spendthrift, whose principles of honour, too weak to withstand so dazzling a temptation, opposed to it no resistance. He secretly accepted the advantageous proposal; and, before they quitted Bath, compelled his child to sacrifice herself to his avarice and ambition.

It was reported, that on the day of the marriage, the bridegroom, not content with receiving a wife totally dowerless, presented the sum of ten thousand pounds to her father; and then hastened with his wretched purchase to the residence of his ancestors. The effect of this unhallowed negociation upon him whom it so cruelly injured, was, beyond description, dreadful. His senses wholly forsook him; for years, the most precious years of human existence, he was reduced to a state of such complete and gloomy alienation, that his fondest friends were compelled to deny themselves his sight, and even to pray for his release! By tedious and gradual degrees, however, the ferment of his mind subsided; he indicated gleams of returning reason, which were rapturously hailed; and, after a long and bitter separation, he was restored to the society of his family. The only surviving near relation he has, is his father; a man of most exemplary character, who, renouncing all intercourse with the world, devotes himself entirely to the melan-

choly task of soothing the shattered spirits, and calming the perturbed imagination of his guiltless but unfortunate son.

Mrs. Neville declined naming any of the persons whom this afflicting story concerned. Indeed, she acknowledged herself as ignorant as ourselves of the family of the lady, as well as of that of the hasty wooer she married.

“The whole of the affair,” she added, “has been hushed up for many years, and consigned as much as possible to oblivion. I can only further inform you, that the ill-fated victim, whose calamities I have been relating, is now so far recovered as occasionally to admit a few friends to share his solitude. I have been told that, though depressed by an incurable melancholy, he cultivates a taste for study; is mild and collected in his manners; enthusiastically grateful to his father for the patient and assiduous attention he has shown him; and, altogether, equally entitled to pity and esteem. Lord Litchmere, I know, has been this autumn to visit him: from him, indeed, I gathered the principal circumstances of my little narrative: circum-

stances which made so deep an impression upon me, that, on beholding the ravages which some secret inquietude was making upon his lordship's peace, all their horror recurred to my affrighted fancy, and I beheld him, in imagination, driven to a state of similar despondence!"

"God forbid!" softly ejaculated Geraldine, looking as pale as death. I fervently joined in the same exclamation, yet secretly wished, on witnessing her consternation, she had not been made an auditor of so depressing a tale. I fear it will put fresh arms into Lord Litchmere's hands: if she sees him unhappy through her means, the tremendous recollection of the mental calamity she has heard described, will start up before her; and so tender is her conscience, so zealously sincere her anxiety to contribute to the welfare of all around her, that, to avoid the stings of self-reproach, she may, in an evil hour, be led to sacrifice her own to the peace of Lord Litchmere. I shrink with aversion from the bare supposition! I hope she can never be so wrong-headedly enthusiastic.

Lord Litchmere can plead no previous engagement with her ; he can reproach her with having given him no delusive hopes : and if he *does* yield to despair, if *his* reason is also subverted, the misfortune may surely be more justly imputed to the frail organization of his faculties, than to her treachery and misconduct. But I trust these are merely vain chimeras with which I am so prematurely alarming myself. Lord Litchmere, in my eyes, has more the air of a man gradually sinking into a decline, than of one threatened with intellectual derangement ; and I feel almost convinced, that a judicious regimen, and a milder climate, would do him more service than ten thousand of Geraldine's sweetest smiles.

To dissipate the sadness with which this story had tinctured our minds, I summoned Emma Cecil to the piano-forte, and asked Mrs. Neville to play the accompaniment of one of her interesting little songs. Just as they had begun, the gentlemen came in from the dining-parlour ; and Albert, charmed to hear an air of Rousseau's, the words of which

were familiar to him, hastened to the instrument, and listened with the most lively expression of pleasure. He was not suffered long to maintain his post.—*La petite Claire*, tired of sitting quiet and unnoticed, rose up and joined him; leaned upon his arm; began whispering to him; pinched his hand; smiled in his face; and, in short, had recourse to such a variety of pretty little persecuting tricks, that, at last, he gave the matter up, and walked with her to a sofa, where she had the pleasure of monopolizing the whole of his attention.

When Emma's song was concluded,

“Is that lovely little creature,” said Mrs. Neville, smiling, and glancing her eyes towards Clara, “often taken with these freaks of troublesome fondness?”

Without enlarging upon the subject, I gave her to understand the exact state of the case.

“And does not their folly weary you to death?”

“More,” replied I, “than, in the presence of Geraldine, I dare acknowledge.”

“Are you, then, Miss Fauconberg, proof against the sin of impatience?”

“Indeed I am afraid not : but on the present occasion no impatience assails me.”

“And what renders you so peculiarly indulgent to this young couple?”

“Why, one of them is so young and beautiful that it is impossible to look at her and be angry ; and the other is the son of Madame de St. Hermine, and *can* do nothing wrong in my eyes.”

“A most unprejudiced defence !” cried I.

“Say, rather,” cried Mrs. Neville, “a most disinterested and grateful one ! Dearest Miss Fauconberg, if ever you hear me censured (and events more marvellous happen every day !) undertake my vindication. No one could resist you ; no one could maintain an inflexible severity who heard you so mercifully and kindly plead the cause of an absent culprit.”

“If ever you should require a champion,” replied Geraldine, laughing, “rely upon me with implicit confidence : but I hope to be a gainer by the compact, and to obtain in you

as warm a defender as I promise you shall find in me."

"Ah, you need make no such conditions! Your conduct, like *Alcina's* beauty, is such

Che non trova l'invidia ove l'emende.*

And you are so generally beloved, that no one, who has not the malice of a fiend, would venture to attack you! As for me, save on the charity of a few benignant beings like yourself, I know not upon what I can rely; since I am not only a very erring, but, to half the people I am acquainted with, a very obnoxious person!"

Then, seeing my brother approaching, she called out to him,

"Mr. Lesmore, come hither, and hear the agreement into which Miss Fauconberg has entered. Do not frighten her by urging its hazards; but rather unite your forces to hers, and, as occasion may require, act as an auxiliary in my cause."

* That envy could detect in it nothing to improve.

She then explained to him the nature of the treaty to which Geraldine had subscribed.

"These warlike preparations," said Ferdinand, with affected solemnity, "wear a very formidable aspect! They look as if you meant to hurl the gauntlet of defiance at half mankind, and were negotiating with every friendly power, in order to oppose an adequate force to the combination of enemies your own aggressions will rouse to vengeance!"

"No; I have no such furiously hostile intentions: but I love not the world, nor does the world love me. I can do it little injury by my contempt or aversion; but I daily feel more sensible of its power to sting and irritate an unsupported antagonist.—Come, come," added she, archly—perceiving Lesmore was preparing to answer her again with the same mock gravity, "let me have no moral speeches upon social love, patient endurance, and universal philanthropy!"—Of all men, you have the least right to preach such doctrine. We know, that tolerant and candid as you would be thought, there is not a more sar-

castic contemner of this dear silly world, than your scrutinizing and fastidious self!"

Geraldine smiled, but looked anxious to hear how Lesmore would defend himself from the charge; and, I own, I shared in her curiosity.

"I know not," said he, "how I may have incurred such an accusation: but I can, with integrity, aver, that I am at this moment in peace and amity with all my fellow-beings, and disposed to take their defence against every opponent of less magical influence than yourself."

"I hope I may understand from this, that if you do not bear arms against me, you will at least remain neutral. Well, in your present benevolent fit, I will endeavour to let that content me. But what has made you, on a sudden, so wonderfully lenient to all your frail and foolish brethren? Have you been converted by example or precept? I suspect that, either by one or both these means, Miss Fauconberg has had a great share in effecting the reformation!"

"Who, me?" cried Geraldine, staring.

“And who more likely?” returned Ferdinand, with quickness.—“Suffer me, since thus fairly led to the subject, suffer me, Miss Fauconberg, to say, that whoever enjoys the happiness of residing under the same roof with you, and remains insensible to the touching influence of unaffected goodness and candour, must have a heart callous to every impression of virtue and benevolence!”

The cheeks of Geraldine were crimsoned with a glow of mingled surprise and modesty. She attempted not to make any disqualifying answer; indeed, I believe, she was almost bereft, at that instant, of the power to speak: but she cast upon my brother a look of such softness and gratitude, that I saw his own eyes flash with pleasure.

In the course of the evening, Mrs. Neville talked again of Sir Henry Tresilian’s expected arrival at Westhill, with the same unembarrassed ease I should speak of a visit from either of my brothers-in-law. It is inconceivable how she can remain so blind to propriety, and so obstinately persevering

in seeking to force the subject upon all hearers.

Mrs. Southwaight took occasion to launch forth in Sir Henry's praise in her accustomed strain of hyperbolical flourish. No one contradicted her; but all seemed to think, that if their partiality was mutual, the baronet had the strangest taste of any man in England! For the privilege of doing the thing in the world she ought to avoid, that is, admitting Sir Henry (his libertine character considered) unaccompanied by his wife, to what wretched society has Mrs. Neville condemned herself! Were I sentenced to reside a week in the house with her present inmate, I should live two thirds of the day shut up in my own apartment, and the rest of the time stuff my ears with cotton to avoid hearing a word she uttered!

Adieu, my dearest Augusta!

L E T T E R X I V .

MISS LESMORE TO THE SAME.

Dec. 1.

So, I find my mother is tired of sitting at home to wait for my return, and sallies forth to-morrow on a visit to Caroline. I have just received a letter from her, giving me notice of this plan, and containing a circumstantial and delighted account of all that you, and the little Julia, said and did, during the fortnight you both spent at Parkton Castle. My young niece, as I foretold, is a wit and a beauty; and as for you, of course every sentence you uttered was the perfection of wisdom and propriety. I never was jealous, Augusta; for, after all, you are an excellent creature: but certain it is, you and Ferdinand were, from infancy, the prime favourites of my mother. Caroline and I have whispered it to each other a thousand times; and

occasionally, we have taken the liberty—not to murmur—but to wonder a little at this manifest preference. Sons, particularly only sons, have a prescriptive right to be considered as animals born only to be spoilt: but why *one* amiable daughter out of *three* amiable daughters, should be thus distinguished, I never could satisfactorily comprehend. Perhaps, the reason may be, that you have always been thought to bear the most striking resemblance to my mother: and no bad compliment either; for, as Mr. Archer says (who, I suspect, was in love with her in her youth), “she was a toast and a beauty in her time; and, let me tell you, would not frighten the crows now!”

Thus, taking it for granted that my prolonged abode here must be equally agreeable to all parties, my mother entirely resigns her claims upon me for the next three weeks. At Christmas, she promises to fetch me herself. Mr. Archer and Geraldine seem perfectly satisfied with this arrangement; and I endeavour to submit unrepiningly to my fate.

But Ferdinand, who only came back to

Highgrove Park, after his journey to town, under pretence of escorting me home, now begins to think it expedient to project some change in his measures. Though treated with all imaginable kindness, and tacitly encouraged to stay, he feels ashamed of seeming to establish himself here with so little ceremony; and, therefore, in a few days departs for the seat of his friend Mr. Melwyn. There he purposes spending a week; and then goes to Parkton Castle, till the arrival at this place of my mother and Caroline.

Monsieur de St. Herminie and Clara, remain with us till January. The scheme I mentioned to you some time since, of establishing them at Woodville, the paternal estate of Geraldine, has been proposed to them, and accepted with gratitude and pleasure. Meanwhile, Albert hourly gains ground in our good graces; and *la petite Claire* hourly becomes more troublesome and fatiguing. Indulgent as he is to her, and gay, good-humoured, and obliging as is his temper, she has had two or three smart contests with him,

and displayed, whilst they lasted, a disposition so petulant, childish, and provoking, that I pity the poor man with my whole heart.

One of these respectable matrimonial wrangles began about the colour of her shoes! She came down, dressed for dinner in a beautiful worked muslin; her waist bound in with a blue ribbon, and her shoes made of green silk. I should never have observed the trifling impropriety, for she interests me too little to care what she wears: but her husband attends wonderfully to her appearance, and has now taught her to expect it as an indefeasible right. He soon, therefore, spied out the solecism in taste, and began a gentle remonstrance. This was a liberty the little lady by no means chose to endure tamely. Not content with separately defending the green shoes and blue sash, she would insist upon their merits when united. Albert, unsuspecting how much she was in earnest, laughed at her arguments, and appealed to us upon the contested point. I anticipated the rising storm, from some

sinister indications I saw gathering around the lady's brow (that brow from which Ferdinand, long since, drew such judicious presages), and, seizing the newspaper, pretended to be so deeply engaged over it, as not to hear a syllable of what was passing. The rest of the company, thoughtless of mischief, gave their verdict in the husband's favour. This was enough: the injured fair-one coloured like crimson; an ill-boding scowl, and an alarming pout of the prettiest rosy lip in the world, announced her indignant sense of the insult she had received; and, after a short, but gloomy pause, she burst into tears, started from her seat, and rushed out of the room!

It is proper here to remark, that Mr. Archer, on this eventful day, dined from home, and, consequently, was not present during the scene I have described. She has hitherto appeared to be under some restraint when he is in company; and seldom indulges him with such specimens of her spirit. Madame de St. Hermine she makes less ceremony with; that lady, with all her penetration and admirable good sense, is either blind, or

wilfully indulgent, to the faults of her daughter-in-law. If she permits herself ever to descry any symptom of error, she attributes it solely to her youth and inexperience ; and thinks time, and maturer judgement, will bring every thing right. I wish they may ; though faults of temper, I believe, are less apt to amend with time, than any others : a little salutary adversity, indeed, might effect the business ; but Clara is not likely to encounter “ so stern and rugged ” a corrector.—Meanwhile, I cannot help observing, that if Geraldine, or even I, from whom Madame de St. Hermine certainly has by no means such high expectations, were, in any single instance, to betray the same waspish spirit, the same caprice and idleness, she would think heaven and earth were coming together ! nor, would either our *youth* or *inexperience* be of any avail towards disarming her indignation, or diminishing her astonishment. Perhaps, the best and the truest reason that can be assigned for her extraordinary lenity, in the present instance is, that in Clara, she sinks the individual in the daughter-in-law ;

and, touched by the distinguished partiality evinced for her son, overlooks, in the person who has given such a proof of discerning sensibility, every defect in disposition or manners.

Be that as it may, Clara has not been tardy in observing how little she has to apprehend from the severity of her new parent. The weakest characters are not the least prompt in discovering with whom they may take liberties; cunning and self-interest, in such cases, supply the place of understanding and discrimination: and Clara, with all her folly, is by no means artless; on the contrary, she is one of whom it most justly may be said, that she is silly without being simple.

But, to return to our green shoes. The abrupt exit of their offended wearer, produced a very striking stage-effect, and gave ample testimony of the merit and resources of the young actress. We looked at each other, for some moments, in silent consternation. At length Madame de St. Hermine dissolved the spell—

“Poor little soul!” cried she, half smiling; “we have carried the jest too far, and se-

riously vexed her. Go to her, my dear Albert, and persuade her to come down."

Albert, though infinitely more concerned than his mother, had yet too much pride; or, so many witnesses being present, too much false shame, to submit to a step which he perhaps imagined might be thought derogatory to his manly dignity. Affecting to make light of all that had passed, he refused to stir, saying,—

"Ladies will have these little whims sometimes, I believe; and the best way to treat them, is to go on as if nothing was the matter."

He spoke with as respectable a semblance of indifference as man could assume; but the fond husband, or rather lover, peeped forth, in defiance of all his efforts; and I plainly saw, that, tempted to disregard our apprehended ridicule, he was every instant upon the point of flying to seek a reconciliation with his offended mate. I determined to furnish him with a plausible pretext for indulging his secret wishes (why should not I be good-natured sometimes, as well as Ge-

raldine?) and rising, with an appearance of far greater interest than I really took in the affair,—

“ O, Monsieur de St. Hermine,” cried I, in an accent of reproach, “ do not be so *very* a husband—so stately, so unmoved!—pray go to Clara—dinner will be announced in a moment, and we cannot think of moving from hence till you have brought her down!”

Geraldine, who, from her knowledge of my perfect disregard of the wife, was well aware that the sole motive which instigated me to this interference, was kindness towards the husband, most cordially aided my design. Ferdinand also appeared to blame Monsieur de St. Hermine’s obduracy; and, at length, as if subdued by our united intercessions, he quitted the room to give relief to his own affectionate heart, by seeking to appease his irritable helpmate.

Our dinner, after this puerile disturbance, was unsociable and dull. Clara, when she condescended to rejoin us, had dimmed the lustre of her eyes by crying, swelled and disfigured her delicate features, and, in exchange

for her accustomed bloom and brilliancy, acquired no power of exciting either sympathy or interest. The cause of her sorrow rendered its effects ridiculous and contemptible; and were I never to see the traces of more respectable grief, I should turn with apathy or disdain from every face that bore the impression of tears. Heroines, I well know, are described as never looking half so irresistible as when in the act of weeping; nothing can be more absurd: crying *does*, and *must*, for the time, deform and injure the most perfect beauty; those even who can shed tears without distortion of muscles, lose all clearness of complexion, and increase both nose and lips to double their usual dimensions! It is to the motive which excites it that crying owes all its charm; for, say what you will, in itself, it is the ugliest convulsion to which the human countenance is liable.

Never let those who weep *for effect* allow their grief, in the presence of a critic upon beauty, to go beyond a *glistening, tearful eye*: that, perhaps, may be pretty; though,

for the mere look of the thing, I should always think an arch, intelligent, playful smile, a thousand times prettier.

Let me now give you some account of the progress to returning health of our neighbour, Lord Litchmere.

This morning, at breakfast, his name being accidentally mentioned, Geraldine remarked, that we had not heard any news of him for two days.

“ Won’t you, my dear uncle,” added she, “ call or send to inquire after him in the course of the morning ?”

“ I will send with all my heart ; but I cannot possibly call before to-morrow.”

Nothing further just then passed upon the subject ; but after Mr. Archer was gone out, and the rest of the party had dispersed, Geraldine, who remained alone with me in the library, suddenly rang the bell, saying,—

“ I must inquire whether any body has been sent to Rushley ; my uncle is the most likely person in the world to have forgotten that he ever intended it.”

“ He knows,” replied I, a little signifi-

cantly, "that he leaves the affair in good hands.—*You* do not forget it."

She looked rather serious at this speech, and answered, with some earnestness,—

"I should be the most ungrateful creature in existence if I did!"

At that moment a servant entered, who, on being asked whether any one was gone, or going to Rushley, said, he did not believe his master had given any orders to that purpose.

"Inquire in the servants' hall," resumed Geraldine, "and if my uncle has not already sent, do you, or Thomas, go directly to Lord Litchmere's, and ask how he does to-day."

The man was shutting the door after receiving these directions, when she hastily added,—

"But go in my uncle's name."

"Yes, ma'am;" and he went out, leaving us at the same instant to discover, that whilst his mistress was yet speaking, my brother had entered, with a book in his hand, at the opposite door.

"Are you come to change your volume,

Ferdinand?" said I, for the mere purpose of breaking a silence, which neither he nor Geraldine seemed disposed to abridge.

"Yes," answered he; and without knowing what he did, he took up an old Review, and still keeping possession of the book with which he had entered, was marching gravely out of the room,—

"Do you know what a prize you have seized?" cried I, laughing. "Pray look how well you execute your own errands."

On discovering his mistake, he forced a faint smile, and went towards one of the bookcases to rectify it.

"Come, come," resumed I, running up to him, and holding his arm, "put away all this learned lumber, and take a walk with us."

"Would not Miss Fauconberg," said he, "wish to wait the return of her messenger from Rushley?"

Geraldine coloured, but immediately answered,—

"If Julia and you like to walk now, I will accompany you with pleasure."

“ I shall be happy to attend you,” returned he, “ at this moment, or an hour hence.”

“ Well, the decision rests with you, Geraldine ; *I* have no messengers to delay me.”

She shook her head at me a little reproachfully ; but rising up, without making any comment upon the insinuation I had uttered, said she would go and prepare for our expedition ; and I instantly followed her.

During the beginning of our walk, Ferdinand scarcely spoke a word, and looked as if sadness and pride were struggling in his breast for pre-eminence. Geraldine, unlike the indifference with which she used, not long since, to witness in him these reserved and distant humours, took pains to cheer and amuse him. If she succeeded in extorting from him a smile, the liveliest satisfaction animated her countenance ; if her attempts failed, she looked grieved and disappointed ; but no symptoms of anger or impatience appeared upon her brow : and after a thoughtful, and almost melancholy pause, she again renewed her exertions. Their kindness was so unwearied, that,

at length, their influence became irresistible. He gradually threw aside all coldness and taciturnity, entreated her to accept his arm, supported his part in the conversation with an air which showed him penetrated by the sweetness of her behaviour; and as we proceeded, manifested, by a thousand little attentions, his anxious solicitude to atone for the previous ungraciousness of his own.

Thus happily reconciled, I saw them so favourably disposed towards each other, that the moment seemed propitious for a full and unreserved explanation. I wished myself an hundred miles off; but I had no possibility of getting entirely out of their way. We were in the midst of an extensive common, and I felt at once afraid to leave them, and at a loss, even had that not been the case, what motive to assign for making the attempt. With the painful and awkward consciousness, therefore, of being, at least in Ferdinand's opinion, a most unseasonable companion, I dragged after them my unwilling steps; lingering behind, however, every now and then, under

pretence of having a pebble in my shoe, or a bramble in my skirts; and sometimes amusing myself with throwing stones for Geraldine's dog to run after. In short, I did all in my power to render myself as little troublesome a third to them as possible. But my precautions were doomed to be fruitless. Before we had proceeded far in the manner I have been describing, we were suddenly encountered by Mrs. Neville, Emma Cecil, and Sir Henry Trevelian, on horseback.

Their intention, we soon found, was to have paid us a visit at Highgrove Park; but on meeting us thus unexpectedly, at the distance of more than a mile from home, Mrs. Neville changed her plan, and declared she would go to Rushley.

"I have never seen the poor invalid," added she, "since his disaster; and if he is able to admit us, it will be an act of charity to call upon him."

Then addressing herself collectively to us all, "Will you be of the party?" cried she.

"I wish Lord Litchmere a speedy cure,"

answered I, laughing, "and all imaginable prosperity; but I beg to decline the honour of being one of his nurses."

"Prudish creature! Your delicacy, I suppose, is alarmed at the idea of visiting a bachelor! Why, my dear Miss Lesmore, do you ever for a moment forget that Lord Litchmere, though one of the worthiest souls in existence, is, for that very reason, perfectly *sans conséquence*? Were I a spinster, I should no more scruple going to see him, than going to pay my duty to my grandmother!"

"But we should be too large a party," said Geraldine.

Mrs. Neville allowed the force of this objection, and contented herself with engaging us to accompany her to Lord Litchmere's gate, promising to regulate the pace of her horse by our own. We complied, as Rushley was scarcely half a mile from the spot where we stood; and presently after, infantry and cavalry, forming a close phalanx, we set out on our march.

This being the first time that either Geraldine or I had seen Sir Henry since his return to

Westhill, it would have been but commonly decorous to have made some inquiry after his lady. More than once, my lips were opening to pronounce her name; and Geraldine owns she experienced a similar inclination, but was restrained from giving way to it, by a secret consciousness of the burlesque affectation of pretending to feel interested about a woman who was so perfectly indifferent, not to herself only, but to the very person to whom it was necessary her inquiries should be addressed. In addition to this, we must, to have executed our pious purpose, have interrupted a very lively conversation in which the baronet, Mrs. Neville, and Lesmore, had engaged; and so, all things duly considered, we thought it would be as well to let poor Lady Tresilian alone, and join in what was going forward.

But a very different subject of disquiet soon completely engrossed us. Just as we arrived within sight of Lord Litchmere's premises, a tremendous black cloud, which we had unwisely disregarded, suddenly poured down upon us a deluge of mingled hail, rain, and snow, accompanied by a squall of wind

so impetuous that we could scarcely stand against it.

“ By Jove !” exclaimed Sir Henry, laughing, “ you are in for it now, young ladies ! The bachelor must, per force, be indulged with the honour of a visit !”

The truth of this seemed incontestable. Not another house, or place of refuge of any description, presented itself to our view ; and the storm, though violent and sudden, did not therefore promise to be of short continuance. We were consequently obliged to submit to necessity ; and, assisted and supported by my brother, who lent to each a stout and able arm, Geraldine and I, though nearly blinded by the shower, and cruelly buffeted by the wind, ran, with our best speed, towards the only sheltering roof the situation we were in afforded. Mrs. Neville and Emma had, at first, from motives of civility to the poor pedestrians, forbore to avail themselves of the advantage of being on horseback, and conscientiously kept by our side ; but Geraldine, entreating they would be less ceremonious, soon prevailed upon them to canter forward ;

whilst Sir Henry, though of no real use to us, showed himself so courteous a knight, that nothing we could say had power to induce him to forsake two damsels in such distressful plight.

Half-drowned, breathless, and panting, we at length reached Lord Litchmere's hall, where, by the direction of Mrs. Neville, a female servant (the only one, perhaps, in the house), was waiting to conduct us to a room up stairs, where we found an excellent fire, and where she assisted us in drying our dripping garments.

In a few minutes Mrs. Neville and Emma Cecil came to us, each bearing in their hand a full goblet of hot wine and water, which the former insisted upon our drinking immediately, as a preservative from the danger of catching cold. This ceremony duly performed, Mrs. Neville proceeded to inform us, that Lord Litchmere was below with the two gentlemen; that he had testified the greatest anxiety lest we should be sufferers by the storm, and had entreated her to say, that if we wished to send home for a change of clothes,

one of his servants should be instantly dispatched to Highgrove Park for that purpose.

We declined this proposal with many acknowledgements; but, encouraged by Mrs. Neville, ventured to solicit the use of his lordship's carriage to convey us home, and promised, as soon as we were ready, to join the party down stairs.

She left us, to carry this message; her riding habit, and the rapid pace with which she had preceded us, having in a great measure preserved her from the ill effects of the storm to which we had been so much longer exposed. Emma accompanied her, and, on some pretence or other, we presently after got rid of our civil attendant.

"Geraldine," said I, as soon as we were left to ourselves, "how do you feel at the thoughts of this first interview with Lord Litchmere?"

"Very sorry," answered she, frankly, "that you, my dear Julia, should be present at it."

"And why?"

"Because, like all other keen observers,

you are sometimes apt to ‘*find out meanings never meant* ;’ and, from words and looks of no real import, to draw very erroneous conclusions.”

“ I protest to you, this is so far from being the case, that my opinion is still in complete suspense with regard to your real sentiments of Lord Litchmere.”

“ Then you scarcely know me better than if I were but an acquaintance of yesterday ! This is your own fault, my dear Julia ; you might surely have learnt to understand me by this time ; for I can most truly assure you, there is nothing profound, nothing impenetrable in this simple little head of mine. However, as you are still so great a stranger to its secrets, I will leave your active imagination to its own conjectures, and despair not of finding as great amusement as ever, in watching the self-raised perplexities with which I have often seen you so comically harassed.”

“ And on what occasions, most sagacious physiognomist, have you observed in me these harassing perplexities ? ”

“ To enumerate them at present would de-

tain us too long ; we had better defer entering upon so copious a subject to a more favourable opportunity. Come, are you ready?"

She then, with a provoking smile, went towards the door ; and the maid re-appearing, I was obliged to be silent, and make what dispatch I could, in order to accompany her down stairs.

Though I admit the truth of Geraldine's charge, and acknowledge that I have been a great scrutinizer of her countenance, when I apprehended its expression might lead me to develope the nature of her feelings, either towards Ferdinand or Lord Litchmere ; yet I own it was not without some surprise I heard her so directly urge the accusation ; but these quiet people are the least of any to be trusted : for when we think them the most blind, they are frequently the most clear-sighted ; and whilst we are anxiously seeking to penetrate their thoughts, they divine all ours with the greatest calmness and facility imaginable.

Lord Litchmere, we found, in the true style of an interesting hero of romance, wore his arm in a sling, and looked more than requisitely thin

and pale to keep up the sentimental character. Yet, at sight of Geraldine, a glow of delight animated and brightened his languid features: whilst, on her part, conquering the embarrassment, which, after his recent avowal, this meeting, it was natural to suppose, would excite, she addressed him with as steady a voice, and maintained as collected a demeanour, as if she had only been speaking to a common acquaintance. Is it not wonderful, that, without an atom of art, she can thus command her looks, and assume, when determined to elude scrutiny, so disengaged an air? She suspected I was prepared to be a spy upon her actions; and the idea, so far from increasing her confusion, gave her spirit and resolution to regulate her conduct in such a manner as should completely baffle my penetration. I admired, at the same time that I was provoked by, her tranquillity!

“ Well, my lord,” cried Mrs. Neville, “ I hope you are duly grateful to me for going about the country and picking up such delightful reinforcements to my party?”

“ Do you ascribe the whole honour of this

recruiting service to your own exertions, Mrs. Neville?" demanded Sir Henry. "Might not the hail, wind, and rain, come in for a small share of the merit?"

"For a very principal one, I make no doubt," said Lord Litchmere; "but I am far from murmuring, for I could have no title to expect otherwise."

"Whatever might be our inducements for paying this visit," said Geraldine, "we have reason to be satisfied, since it has procured us the pleasure of seeing your lordship sufficiently recovered to be able to enjoy the society of your friends."

He bowed, and thanked her; and she presently added, "Have you yet ventured out, my lord?"

"No, I have not."

"Then, why, in the name of heaven," cried Sir Henry, "do you vegetate here by yourself? Why not send for some good-natured aunt, or cousin, or sister, or somebody of that sort, to act in the double capacity of nurse and companion? Nothing so forlorn as

a man shut up, during illness, without a consoling female attendant."

"That may be very true," said Mrs. Neville; "but these consoling female attendants are in such request, that it is not always easy to procure them exactly at the moment when they are most wanted. His lordship's sisters are engaged in contributing to the comfort of their father; and as for aunts and cousins, they are a useful species of individuals of which the race, in his family, is not very abundant.

"And in mine," resumed Sir Henry, "it exceeds all reasonable limits of decency! I can go into no house where I have the honour to claim kindred, without being assailed by half a dozen antiquated dowagers, or sallow virgins, who "dear nephew" and "dear cousin" me, beyond measure and credibility."

"If they can always receive you so tenderly," cried Mrs. Neville, "they are patterns of mildness and forbearance, worthy to be held up as examples to their whole sex!"

"I assure you, I have not a single enemy amongst the whole tribe."

“ Nor never had?”

“ Why, I cannot, in conscience, positively assert that. There have been times, when some of the sisterhood have met me with very ill-boding looks, and heads held up so high, they seemed to be peering beyond this nether sphere, and soaring, in contemplation, into the celestial regions. But, as I really have a regard for most of the venerable ancients, to whose kindness, in my schoolboy days, I was indebted for many an hour of jubilee, and many a bright half-guinea, I overlook the chillness of their first reception, and, by means of a few scandalous anecdotes, and a great deal of rattle and assurance, gradually succeed in making them relax from their rigid stateliness, and resume their accustomed good-humour.”

“ Silly souls!” exclaimed Mrs. Neville. “ However, I imagine they know you to be incorrigible, and, having given up the point, are content to derive from you such amusement as a merry-andrew is capable of affording!”

“ And pray,” said Geraldine, smiling, “ is

that the principle upon which Sir Henry is admitted at Westhill?"

"A very pertinent inquiry!" cried Lord Litchmere.

"And one," resumed the baronet, "which I beg leave to answer. No, Miss Fauconberg, I am not tolerated at Westhill upon the privileged terms of a buffoon!—It would be happy for me if I were. My lot is a far more cruel one. I am merely allowed access there to undergo the torments of incessant and unwearied reprehension! I can give you no idea of the life I lead! The most inflexible censor of ancient times, was an angel of mercy compared with the iron-hearted Mrs. Neville."

"This accusation against her," said Geraldine, shaking her head, "reflects some discredit upon yourself. The errors she can so severely condemn, cannot be of a very light complexion."

"*A Daniel come to judgement!*" exclaimed Mrs. Neville, exultingly. "*Yea, a Daniel! O wise young judge, how do I honour thee!*"

"I caution you, Sir Henry," said Les-

more, “to beware of the united forces of two such formidable opponents. They have entered into a most dangerous league, and reciprocally engaged to aid, abet, and assist each other against all attacks, foreign or domestic. To hazard a reflection upon one, therefore, is to awaken the sleeping prowess of the other; and surely he must be a bold man who would venture to incur the single displeasure of either—much more the combined enmity of both.”

“I am too proud of the alliance,” resumed Mrs. Neville, “to disown it; and too well pleased with the honourable fidelity with which my confederate observes our treaty, to withhold from her the tribute of praise so justly her due.”

A servant now appeared to say Lord Litchmere’s carriage was ready. Geraldine and I immediately arose, thanked his lordship, both for the use of the chaise, and the shelter he had afforded us, and expressing our cordial wishes for his speedy and entire restoration, were preparing to depart,—but detaining Geraldine a moment, whilst Mrs. Neville and

Sir Henry were discoursing at some distance, our noble host said, in a subdued and faltering voice,—

“ Miss Fauconberg, I live only in the hope of being re-admitted once again at Highgrove Park!—Deny me not the consolation of hearing my presence there will be to you a subject of no pain!”

This unexpected address, uttered so immediately in my vicinity, and though not overheard by Ferdinand, yet evidently, and even suspiciously observed by him, effectually banished all that forced composure which, when allowed time for deliberation, Geraldine had been so well able to assume. Her cheeks were instantly covered with blushes, and looking down, hesitating, and speaking very low, she answered,—

“ I can never behold with pain any friend of my uncle’s—any one to whom I am myself so much indebted.”

Lord Litchmere caught at these words with transport; his eyes sparkled with joy, and he seemed scarcely able to refrain from snatching her hand in presence of the whole

party : but Geraldine, who now timidly raised her head, and saw the emotion depicted upon his countenance, determined to put an end to a dialogue which had so cruelly disconcerted her. Once more she wished him good morning, shook hands with Mrs. Neville, and, calling to me to follow her, hastened towards the door.

“ Ferdinand,” cried I, looking back, “ will you go home in the chaise with us ?”

“ No,” said he, with some precipitation, “ if Mrs. Neville permits it, I will do myself the honour of dining at Westhill.”

“ Incomprehensible mortal !” exclaimed she, “ I have invited him a million of times, and he never would come near me ; and now I had given the matter up, he graciously offers me his company ! Pray do not retract, however ; for though it is more than you deserve, I shall really be extremely glad to see you.”

This arrangement so infinitely surprised me, and, as it appeared, Geraldine likewise, that we involuntarily lingered at the door listening to its preliminaries. At length, finding the whole business definitively settled,

we proceeded forward, attended by Sir Henry, who handed us into the chaise.

Before we drove off, Ferdinand came out to request I would send his servant to him at Westhill, with his things to dress for dinner : I promised to do so ; and the postillion was ordered to proceed.

During our short drive, Geraldine and I were both almost wholly silent. What were the reflections which engrossed her, I can only guess ; mine were decidedly far from pleasant. The mild, and even encouraging answer, I had heard her give Lord Litchmere, the rapture with which it inspired him ; her blushes and confusion, and Lesmore's sudden determination of spending the day at Westhill, all seemed to me to connect together by an invisible chain, and filled me with disquietude. I felt convinced that my brother's desertion of us originated in a sudden pang of jealousy ; which, whether groundless or not, I, who had overheard all that passed, was as ill qualified as himself to judge. It had but that very morning seemed obvious to me, from her patient and assiduous atten-

tion to him, that Geraldine entertained for Lesmore the most favourable sentiments; he himself had appeared struck and affected by the exemplary spirit of endurance she had shown; yet, two hours after—" *nay, not so much, not two,*" she had destroyed all the merit of a conduct so conciliating, by the softness with which she had treated another, who was a declared pretender to her favour.

This contrariety in the actions of one so little subject to caprice, so superior to all motives of coquettish levity, completely bewildered me. At the same time, I felt ashamed, after the conversation which had so recently passed between us at Rushley, to own my perplexities, and, therefore, by no means regretted the disposition to silence which my companion herself manifested.

On reaching Highgrove Park, the first person we encountered, was poor Albert's little fretful wife. She met us in the hall, with a face that announced her half prepared to cry, and half to scold; and, complaining bitterly of our long absence, told us she had been left quite by herself the whole morning; and

that it had appeared *so* dull, and *so* tiresome, she had done nothing but wander about from one room, and one window, to another.

“ Perhaps,” said I, “ that may have had some share in contributing to the dulness you complain of.”

“ But where was Madame de St. Hermine?” inquired Geraldine.

“ In the dressing-room, making extracts from a stupid botanical book she has borrowed; and so intent, she will scarcely look up, or speak a word.”

“ And has Monsieur de St. Hermine likewise been absent the whole time?”

“ Yes; he went out just before you did.”

“ Well,” said I, “ you may comfort yourself with this reflection. We have been caught in a tremendous shower; our clothes have been quite drenched; we were forced to seek refuge in the house of a sick man, whom I am sure you would have thought duller even than home; and we are now returned, completely fatigued, out of spirits, and dissatisfied with our peregrination.”

This information *did* appear to console her

a little: but so fearful was she of being again deserted, that she never lost sight of us for a moment till the first dinner-bell rung.

We communicated our adventure to Madame de St. Hermine, but in general terms, and without alluding to Lord Litchmere's particular address to Geraldine at parting. I learnt afterwards, however, that when alone with her, she had spoken more openly to her excellent friend, and related to her all that had passed. Dear Geraldine! how I love the invariable frankness of her disposition! Madame de St. Hermine fully acquits her pupil for the answer she returned to the embarrassing question which had been put to her.

“With more experience, or less artlessness,” said she, “Geraldine might, perhaps, without offending her noble admirer, have devised some equivocating, temporizing reply, which should have sounded very civil, but, in fact, have meant nothing. I prefer, in an ingenuous girl, the unguarded, though perhaps dangerous simplicity she has betrayed. It was scarcely to be expected, see-

ing him suffering by an illness brought on through her means, and conscious of the sorrow it would inflict upon him to interdict his visits, that she should possess the cruel fortitude to put a negative upon his humble solicitation."

The candour of this commentary disposed me to view the affair in a better light; and, relying upon the wisdom of one whose judgment I have so often found reason to approve, my spirits revived, and my fears gradually vanished.

We saw no more of my brother throughout the day, having retired to our rooms before he returned. Geraldine, I fancied, was unusually grave and silent the whole evening; perhaps my *active imagination* deceived me, for nobody else remarked it: or, at most, her taciturnity might result solely from fatigue.



Dec. 2.

WHERE will all these doubts and misgivings end? No sooner have I had leisure to

recover from some apprehension excited by Geraldine, than Lesmore starts forward, and renews every painful mistrust.

After breakfast this morning, whilst she was practising with me a new harp and piano-forte duet in the drawing-room, the sound of music attracted towards us both Albert and Ferdinand, and detained them a considerable time at the back of our chairs. Lesmore was the first to leave us. Madame de St. Hermine called him away to expound to her a long troublesome Latin sentence she had met with in the midst of a dissertation upon botany; and soon after he was gone a servant entered to deliver to him a letter. I told the man to put it down, as I was going into the dressing-room in a few minutes, and would take it to him myself. The letter remained, therefore, upon the table till our duet was nearly over; and during that interval, Clara, who had now likewise joined us, and who unites to her other recommendations an excess of curiosity, took it up, and begun examining it in all directions; seal, shape, ad-

dress, nothing escaped her; and, at last, bringing it close to our instruments, she held it out, first to Geraldine, and then to me, saying, “ Look, what a pretty hand!—Do, look! and see what an odd seal!”

This interruption, in the midst of our concluding movement, was far from being pleasant to either of us. Geraldine, however, to satisfy the importunate bearer, cast a careless glance upon the letter; but had scarcely done so, before I observed her, through the harp strings, change countenance. No circumstance you will believe, could be better calculated to awaken all the inquisitiveness of which my own nature is susceptible: I instantly ceased playing, and taking the letter from Clara’s out-stretched hand, knew the writing and the seal, the moment I beheld them, to be those of Mrs. Neville. The latter is very remarkable: she has had it lately engraved; and I perfectly remembered her showing it to us the last time we were at Westhill. It represents a female figure, completely veiled; under which is written

Truth; and round the edge of the stone, in scarcely perceptible characters, are these words: "*We weave her veil ourselves!*"

I made no comments upon a discovery so undesired, but was hastening up stairs to deliver this epistle to its lawful owner, when he unexpectedly re-appeared.

"Mr. Lesmore," cried Clara, "here's a letter for you, which comes from a lady; and it did not arrive by the post. Who can write to you, here, in the country?"

"Take care what correspondents you encourage," answered he, smiling, "lest I should ever retaliate that question."

He then went to the window to open and read his letter, which, as well as I could discern, seemed to surprise and perplex him. He twice perused it with the utmost attention; folded, and held it afterwards a considerable time in his hand, apparently musing upon its contents; and, at last, without speaking, walked slowly and thoughtfully out of the room.

"Dear!" exclaimed Clara, "I was in:

hopes he would have told us who it was from."

We left her to regret the disappointment, and went up stairs to our accustomed pursuits. Neither Geraldine nor I spoke of the letter the whole day. Lesmore has not mentioned it; and, to this hour, its purport is a complete mystery to us.

These two inexplicable and ever-varying beings, have adopted a new mode of behaviour towards each other, equally distinct from the cold neglect they manifested on their first acquaintance, and the mutual solicitude to please, which was evident in their looks and conversation at a subsequent period. They are now, as if by common consent, scrupulously, and even ceremoniously well-bred, but, to all appearance, as indifferent as statues!—They give me the idea of two people who feel offended, yet are determined neither to complain, nor, if possible, to betray their resentment.

Amidst all these undefinable and petty vexations, I have but one motive of consolation. Mr. Archer has just shown me a let-

ter he received this morning from our brother-in-law, Davenant, containing, amidst a mountain of tiresome detail, respecting hunting matters, and election quarrels, the following precious morsel :—

“ I have some reason to think the two Dudleys will be down here in a week or ten days. If they should defer their arrival till about the time we mean to set out for your house, shall we invite them to accompany us? *Consult Julia before you decide!*”

The sentence in Italics was what procured me the pleasure of seeing the rest of the paragraph. It awakened Mr. Archer’s curiosity, but gave me not the smallest embarrassment. I am proof against Davenant’s powers of raillery; he never knows himself exactly what he means, and all that his friends can positively comprehend is, that his wit is perfectly good-humoured, and that its harmless sallies supply him with a motive for displaying a mouthful of broad white teeth, which I have often told Geraldine, might, in failure of ivory, serve her to paint miniatures upon.

I returned, therefore, to Mr. Archer's smiling interrogatories, such answers as I deemed proper—neither blushed nor faltered; but heard, with no inconsiderable degree of internal complacency, that he means to write to the Dudleys, in order to urge their visit.

By the frankness with which I have spoken upon this subject, you may perceive, my dear Augusta, that I attach to it no very serious interest. All that really does appertain to it, I am ready to acknowledge, at least to you; though I should hesitate, from the fear of misconstruction, being so explicit in my confessions to any one else. I neither am, nor ever have been, what is called *in love* with Arthur Dudley: but I delight in his conversation; never met him without satisfaction, and never parted from him without regret.—

“The very head and front of my offending

“Hath this extent, no more”——

Adieu, my dear sister; I am sorry, that notwithstanding the length of this letter, it contains so few particulars calculated to give

you pleasure. My next, I hope, will be of
a more comfortable tenour.

Yours most affectionately,

JULIA LESMORE.

LETTER XV.

THE HONOURABLE MRS. NEVILLE TO FERDINAND
LESMORE, ESQ.

I HAVE scarcely closed my eyes the whole night, nor, since you quitted this roof, enjoyed one moment's respite from disquietude. Are you aware of the wound you have given to my tranquillity? Had that mysterious exclamation which still vibrates in my ear—had it the full and solemn meaning I have so unaccountably affixed to it?—Speak openly, I conjure you!—Why, when last night you heard me gaily boasting of the perfect submission to which I had trained my present inmate;—why, when I exulted in my power, and magnified my own tyranny—why was your dark eye fixed upon me so steadfastly? And why that low, energetic, yet half-finished sentence, beginning with—“ Ah, Mrs. Neville !” why was it so abruptly broken off?—Oh heavens! what deep and cutting

significance it appeared to have!—Yet was it uttered in an accent of melancholy more than reproach:—it struck, however, at my very heart; it awed, it chilled me! Lesmore I cannot live without its explicit interpretation. Be frank, be generous: deal with me as a brother; and if admonition appears to you requisite, bestow it without reserve. I dread nothing from you but harassing and unexplained intimations.

FREDERIGA NEVILLE.

LETTER XVI.

FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ. TO MRS. NEVILLE.

IF you can really bear truth—if my interposition receives the sanction of your commands, and appears not entitled to your displeasure, most joyfully, dearest Mrs. Neville, will I step forward with such feeble light as I am capable of throwing upon your present situation. My views in so doing, will be as disinterestedly pure, as they are fervent in friendship, and zealous in every good wish for your prosperity, fame, and repose. Had you that first of all earthly blessings, an enlightened, affectionate, and able female counsellor at hand, it would be in me the height of presumption to obtrude upon you the slightest observation. But young, animated, and beautiful as you are, I behold you left utterly to yourself; and, pardon me for saying it, I behold you in the most perilous and difficult circumstances that any woman can possibly

be placed in. The earnestness with which you condescend to solicit my sincerity, reflects upon you the highest credit; and shows a mind disposed to admit conviction, a heart prepared to combat with its prepossessions. Yet the experiment is a delicate and hazardous one. With the best intentions, I may injure rather than forward the cause I venture to undertake; the impending evils I represent to myself, I may touch upon with too rough and incautious a hand; neither my age, wisdom, nor experience, qualify me for the *admonitory* office with which you would invest me: I may forfeit your friendship, and excite your perpetual indignation. Weigh maturely all these motives for repressing my further interference, and then, if you have the magnanimity still to demand it, fearlessly and honestly I will acquit myself, with all a brother's love, and all an admiring friend's most anxious solicitude, of the momentous trust you deign to repose in me.

Your respectfully devoted

F. LESMORE.

LETTER XVII.

MRS. NEVILLE TO FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ.

You prolong the painful suspense I suffer, with an ingenious cruelty of which I should scarcely have believed you capable. Can I urge you in stronger terms than I have already used? Fear no indignation from me: I think of you so highly, I am assured that whatever daggers you may speak, your motives will be so truly honourable, your views so generous, that I shall more than pardon—I shall be forced to admire your noble frankness. “The small still voice” of conscience, whispers to me, that I might perhaps spare you this ungrateful task: I fear it is in my own power to anticipate all you have to say. The wilful blindness—never so complete as it may have appeared—to which I have weakly given way, now yields to broad, glaring, hateful flashes of light, that startle and

disinay me. I see myself such as I am, and such as I must seem to you ; and my aching eyes turn with abhorrence from the picture ! Yet I am not strong enough to combat wholly by myself : the delusion, though voluntary, has been too powerful ; and unless some saving hand is held out to support me, I fear I shall sink in the arduous contest. Be yours that sustaining hand, excellent and honourable Lesmore ! I can bear to let you probe deeper into my wounded mind than I dare probe into it myself ; and, to recover, or to merit your esteem, could resolve upon such sacrifices as no other earthly remuneration would enable me to attempt.

The chief circumstance which gives me courage to say all this, is the perfect knowledge I have of the present state of your heart. I am convinced of your serious and deep-rooted affection for Miss Fauconberg. Had you still been a disengaged man, I had not ventured to select for a confidant one so young, and so eminently distinguished by all those advantages which the world is most accustomed to prize. But I regard you as a

“stricken deer;” and in whatever you may counsel or reprove, I feel assured you will be actuated by genuine principles of integrity, wholly distinct from every other consideration.

I have now set you an example of that sincerity I so earnestly solicit. Let it stimulate you to emulation.

My friend and brother, adieu.

F. NEVILLE.

LETTER XVIII.

FERDINAND LESMORE TO MRS. NEVILLE.

You have removed from the task imposed upon me, half its difficulties, by the unexampled kindness of your last letter. Since its perusal, I feel more than ever interested in your fate; nor would my own, how brilliant or wretched soever it might be, justly merit congratulation if I saw you afflicted—or pity, if I beheld you happy.

Let this short, but strictly honest preface, suffice. I now tremblingly proceed to my allotted province.

Am I communicating to you any new intelligence when I venture to assert, that the guest who now enlivens your small circle at Westhill, that Sir Henry Tresilian, in short, is your most passionate admirer? I have known it long; and have known it from a

source impossible to be doubted. What that was, it were superfluous to mention ; the fact remains unquestionable : and all that it is necessary to consider is, how it best becomes Mrs. Neville to act under such circumstances.

Whether you suspected his partiality or not, there are many extenuating reasons to be assigned for the ready admission you have granted to him beneath your roof. He is your relation ; you have known him from your infancy ; his niece is your chosen and beloved inmate ; and some degree of pity might seem due to him for the unhappiness of his own domestic connexion. But, dearest Mrs. Neville, yet greater pity is due to yourself for entertaining, at your own hazard, such dangerous commiseration ! You now rally and laugh ; affect to treat Sir Henry with sarcastic severity, and, perhaps, have even conceived the chimerical project of reforming his sentiments. But allow me to judge of him by myself. In a similar predicament, whatever harshness I might sometimes experience, from a lovely woman to whom I was strongly

attached, yet, whilst she granted me access to her house; whilst she confined her resentment to remonstrances which she allowed me opportunity to answer; whilst my attentions were accepted, and my complaints permitted—forgive my temerity—but whilst all this was the case, I should be far from despairing of ultimate success! Sir Henry could scarcely, for himself, be in a more promising situation; he is aware of it, I am certain; and thence the patience to bear your pretended tyranny, of which he makes so great a boast.

It proceeds from no contempt of the principles of your sex (for, to a male friend I should hold the same language) that I confidently aver the most effectual, perhaps, in unguided youth, the *only* safeguard from danger, is distrust of our own strength; and resolution to put ourselves out of the possibility of temptation. As long as you retain Miss Cecil under your protection, Sir Henry imagines he has some claim to being received himself; and very probably, she was so easily granted to your wishes, solely from that

consideration. Dear Mrs. Neville, have you the fortitude to restore to her former patroness your engaging little *protogée*? I know the sacrifice will be a most afflicting one: but on its performance depends every thing most valuable to you in life. The adoption of that child, though but temporary, I will own, always gave me pain. I considered it as an act of injustice towards Lady Tresilian; and as a species of selfishness unworthy your generous and feeling character. Resign her to her early friend; and instead of continuing to defy all risk, to set yourself up as the reformer of a man in love, to disregard the remarks and censures of an observant world, seek security from blame, by placing yourself beyond the reach of evil; and, as a plausible pretext for dismissing your insinuating guest, remove, for a season, to the mansion of some friend, whose acquaintance with him sanctions not his visits, and under whose roof your opinions may have leisure to cool—your principles opportunity to assert their native integrity.

In all that I have thus plainly stated, I

beg you to believe, that I have been wholly uninfluenced by motives of personal enmity towards Sir Henry. Were he acquainted with the part I am acting, it is probable that he would be of a different sentiment: but that is a consideration which, I acknowledge, gives me very little concern. I flatter myself, that in faithfully fulfilling the office of a friend to you, I incur no risk of being deemed treacherous to him. At all events, his opinion upon this peculiar subject would be to me a matter of utter indifference. That I think favourably of his powers of pleasing, this letter is an incontestable proof. I had never troubled Mrs. Neville with cautions and counsels concerning an object whom I regarded as beneath her consideration. Sir Henry has so many good qualities, so spirited and manly a deportment, such resources of conversation, such well-bred and agreeable manners, that, to the aggregate of all these advantages, may justly be attributed the apprehensions for you which I have thus dared to state.

And now, dearest madam, have I suf-

ficiently put your placability to the test? I could scarcely complain, were you to cast upon me a sentence of perpetual banishment; since, even to myself, the boldness of these remonstrances appears strange and unexampled. Yet, let me implore your clemency and candour; and if any sentiment which I have dared to express, appears to you harsh and unqualified, attribute to want of skill in the arrangement of my ideas, not to indifference as to giving you pain, the unintentional offence. One merit I may, at least, plead; I have not been diffuse: it would have been an insult to your heart and understanding to suppose that you could want reminding of the higher and more momentous considerations, which, exclusive of those merely temporal ones I have suggested, urge you to a breach of the connexion you are unwarily engaged in.

I am impatient to receive from you an attestation of pardon. Any extraordinary delay will fill me with compunction and alarm.

Yours, with the truest devotion and regard,

F. LESMORE.

LETTER XIX.

MRS. NEVILLE TO FERDINAND LESMORE.

PROFOUNDLY humiliated, oppressed with self-condemnation, heartless and dejected, every feeling of my soul, save gratitude towards you, seems converted into bitterness and asperity. Insensible to all surrounding objects, I neither hear nor see what passes before me : one sole idea absorbs every other, and rigorously exerts its painful predominance.

I will not tell you, Lesmore, that your letter has opened my eyes. I have no title to claim the indulgence which such previous blindness might obtain for me. No; the danger to which I exposed myself was not unsuspected; I clearly discerned, but voluntarily incurred, and presumptuously defied it! Such conduct in any other woman would have appeared to me the height of madness or criminality: but, infatuated by vanity, urged on by the lassitude of having nothing to

do, I rushed headlong forward, fully aware of the insecurity of the path, but interested and amused by the idea of conquering or eluding all its difficulties. How am I punished for such rash and daring folly! Can I submit to own it? This man, this fatal enemy to my repose—far less guilty, however, than his weak victim—is acquiring, though still unknown to himself, the most arbitrary domination over my soul! Betrayed by my own imprudence, I have nothing to reproach him with. He has acted with openness, at least, if not with principle; I knew his attachment when I permitted this visit; I suspected it even long before: but notwithstanding a conviction so well calculated to put me on my guard, as if impelled by some malignant influence, I felt a secret impatience to try over him my power; to give evidence of my own firmness; and to experience the charm of being recalled from apathy and torpor, to the active exertion of my restless faculties.

Yet let me do myself the justice to declare, that in seeking to establish Emma Cecil as an inmate at Westhill, I was instigated by no

unworthy views, nor did I immediately anticipate the privilege it would seem to give him, of rendering his own visits more frequent. Affection for the child, and weariness of myself, alone prompted the measure. Hardened against Lady T—— by disgust at her coldness and formality, I forgot what was due to her as a fellow-being; I neither consulted her wishes, nor my own sense of justice; but finding Sir Henry eager to second the unfeeling monopoly I was desirous of making, every thing relating to it was left to his management. I banished all reflection, and treated as unaccountable and absurd, those evidences of disapprobation at my usurpation, which were demonstrated in the aspect of his wife.

The first circumstance which awakened me to better sentiments, was the downcast look, the expressive silence, with which Miss Fauconberg and your sister, on my next visit to Highgrove Park, heard me speak of the ill-judged arrangement so hastily concluded. In the symptoms that betrayed their instantaneous perception of its impropriety, they differed only according to the different modifi-

cation of their respective characters. In Julia's taciturnity, my justly-alarmed conscience traced indications of severity and indignation; in the soft and ever-interesting countenance of Geraldine, I beheld a touching mixture of surprise and generous regret which penetrated me with affectionate gratitude. Sweet, and most-attaching young creature!—the favourite of nature and of fortune, she appears sent into the world to show us how such advantages ought to be borne. She knows how to give grace to station, how to temper dignity with feeling, how to join delicacy with frankness, and to the most irreproachable purity of conduct, how to unite the most tolerating spirit. In her manner of listening to the communication of which we are speaking, there was much of the benevolent concern I so lately witnessed in *your* more-strongly marked features: less blameworthy, however, at that time, the impression made upon me by the sight was less poignant and effectual. I shook off the temporary uneasiness, extinguished the sparks of conviction that sought to glimmer within my breast,

and deliberately plunged into darkness and hazard.

Yet the evil that has resulted from a system so perverse, differs from every thing which, in my least confident moments, I thought myself in danger of incurring. The conjectures and criticisms of a busy public—the hints, nods, and whispers of a scandal-loving circle, were what represented themselves most formidably to my fancy. These, I believe, prompt as is malignancy to seize occasions of darting forth its venom, have had no leisure to spread and increase. Sir Henry's abode at Westhill has hitherto been too short to rouse the slumbering activity of defamation; and, in the societies I have mixed in since his arrival, it has not appeared to me, though jealously observant of every countenance, that any injurious suspicions lurked beneath the smiles with which I was greeted. For this exemption I am probably indebted to the otherwise useless and burthensome presence of Mrs. Southwaight. She has defended me from the shafts of slander; but from the far more oppressive misfortune of becoming the

dupe of my own presumption—of enduring the reproaches of my own conscience for sharing in a criminal attachment—could *she*, could any mortal hand protect me? Oh, tardy, fruitless, and heart-piercing reflection! My fault has been great,—but acute and terrible is its penalty!

Yes, Lesmore, I feel that you are right; temporizing measures will not do: the axe must be laid to the root of the tree, and all intercourse decisively renounced with the man who has gained so dangerous an ascendant over me. No matter: the necessity this persuasion lays me under of exerting myself, supports my drooping spirits. Inaction, at the present moment, would be death to me. I take a gloomy pleasure in meditating upon the painful sacrifices I am about to make. Orders are already given for my departure from hence; I have written to Lady Alicia Faulkland to prepare her for my visit; Emma Cecil's little trunk is packed; I have withstood, with immoveable firmness, the first brunt of her uncle's opposition to this inexplicable resolution; the charge of caprice, the

interrogations of vague suspicion, the supplications of passion, I have sternly slighted and resisted them all. My temper seems wrought up to an unnatural degree of inflexibility; I have shed no tears, nor yielded to a moment's softness or self-compassion. If, for an instant, I feel tempted to indulge any gentle emotion, it is, when I repeat to myself the words, so precious to my heart, with which you conclude the little preface to your last letter! Invaluable to me is the friendship they profess; cultivate it with generous perseverance, my admirable counsellor; instil a portion of it, by your influence, into the pure bosom of her you love; and the pity I deny myself, think me not unworthy of exciting!—Farewel.

F. N.

LETTER XX.

FERDINAND LESMORE TO MRS. NEVILLE.

A FAR nobler sentiment than pity have you raised in my breast. The promptitude of decision, the vigour of mind, the unbending resolution you display, entitle you to the highest veneration; and no language can do justice to the gratifying emotions with which I discovered in you such virtuous and exalted fortitude.

Deign, I entreat you, to admit me occasionally amongst the number of your correspondents. I shall ever experience the most anxious solicitude to know the state of your mind. Fear not that it will long retain its present painful sensations. The part you are performing will speedily and assuredly bring to you an inestimable and permanent recompense. Serenity, and unmixed happiness, will revisit your congratulating heart : and,

once again, shall I have the unspeakable satisfaction of beholding you, as in brighter days, the spring, soul, and boast, of all who are admitted to the honour of your acquaintance!

I leave this place to-morrow. Shall I wait upon you before I depart? Impose upon yourself no restraint—whatever you decide must be right.

Unfeignedly yours,

F. LESMORE.

L E T T E R X X I.

TO FERDINAND LESMORE, ESQ.

No, my best friend, come not at this moment: I wish, indeed, to see you, but many reasons forbid it. Heaven prosper your consolatory predictions!—Alas! how little do they seem in unison with my present feelings!

I will write as soon as I have any thing to communicate capable of giving you pleasure.

I, too, go to-morrow!—Adieu.

F. N.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



